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ABSTRACT

An instructors' manual describing the "Write-Now" approach to teaching writing to adult students preparing for the General Educational Development (GED) test together with a final report describing the project that developed the manual is presented. Topics covered in the 16 chapters of the manual include the following: what we believe about the teaching of writing in adult basic education/GED programs; collecting writing samples; Write-Now journals; writing across the curriculum; a Write-Now GED Class; the writing process; two process-conference cases; the new writing sample test of the GED; Floyd's chapter (excerpts from a student journal); publishing student writing; some write-for-life applications; the write-light department; caring and sharing; illustrations (mathematics); and life stages of an article. Other information in the manual includes review selections, a 57-item bibliography, and resource addresses. The final report follows the manual and describes the project's purposes, administration, and procedures, as well as its evaluation activities. Among its extensive appendices are an inservice workshop guide to train instructors in using the manual and several articles about teaching writing. An annotated list of 13 resources is also provided. (KC)

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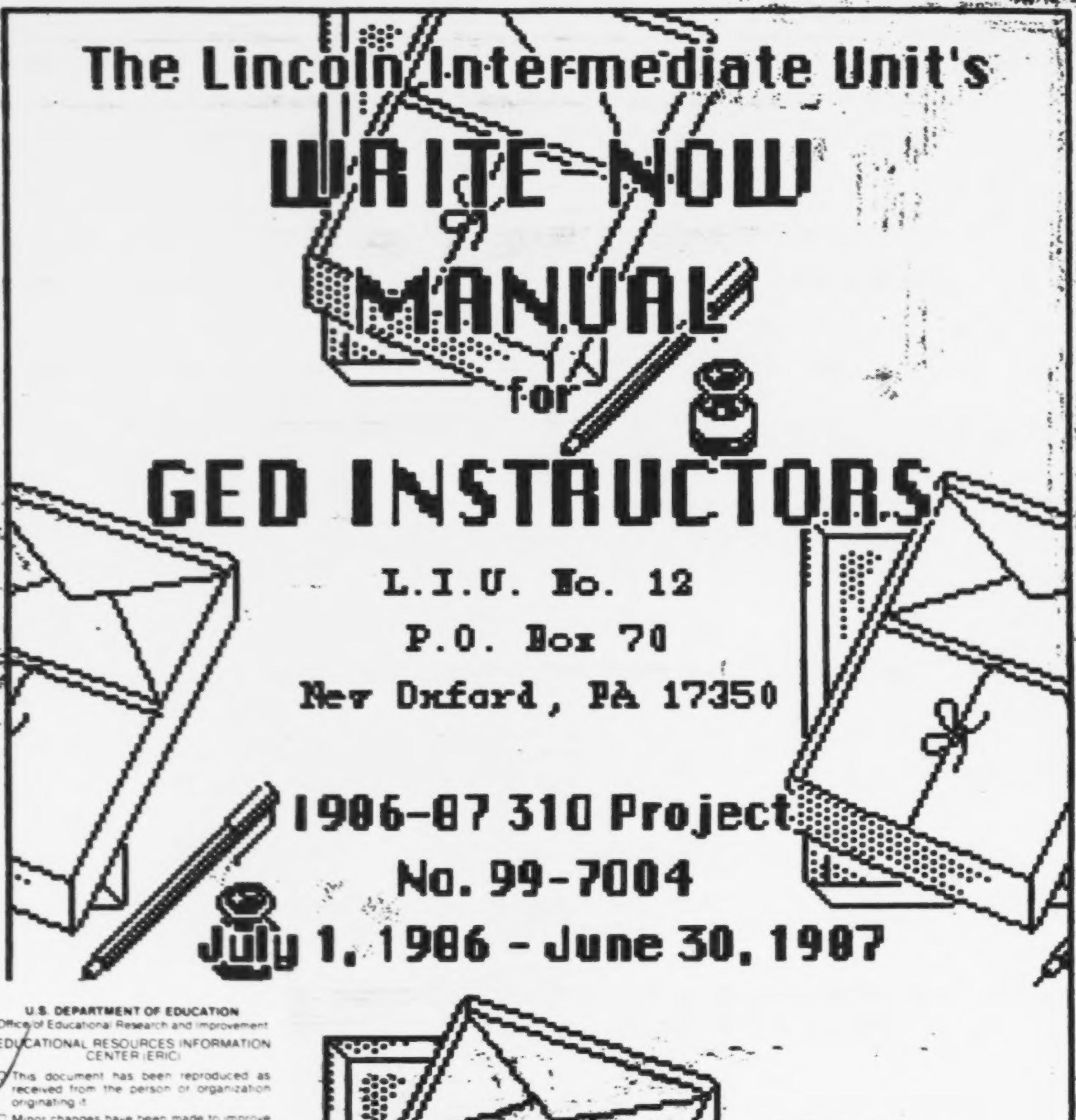

### The Lincoln Intermediate Unit's

# WRITE NOW MANUAL for GED INSTRUCTORS

L.I.U. No. 12
P.O. Box 70
New Oxford, PA 17350

1986-87 310 Project
No. 99-7004
July 1, 1986 - June 30, 1987

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# THE LINCOLN INTERMEDIATE UNIT'S

# WRITE-NOW MANUAL FOR GED INSTRUCTORS

Lincoln Intermediate Unit No. 12(PA)

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310 Project Contract No. 99-7004 in the amount of $4,859 to Agency No. 1-12-00-000-0 for the period from 7/1/86 to 6/30/87.

Copies of this project's report and products can be obtained from AdvancE at the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Resource Center or from the L.I.U. at Project A.B.E.

This **manual** is a result of a project supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Office of Education and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The opinions expressed herein, however, do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Office of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

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## INTRODUCING THE WRITE-NOW TEAM

### Project Coordinator

George Rutledge works primarily with ABE/GED students as program coordinator and instructor at I.U. 12's Project A.B.E. in York, PA. He also teaches GED classes in the evenings during the school year. George has coordinated several 310 projects, most of them dealing with some aspect of teaching writing in both individualized and group settings. Currently serving as Vice-President for Intermediate Units for the Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English(PCTE), he is interested in staff development at all levels of education. George is an adjunct instructor of English at Millersville University of PA and a frequent workshop presenter.

### Project Facilitators

Carol Almeida serves the Lincoln Intermediate Unit as an ESL instructor at three sites. Carol has participated in and conducted several staff development workshops in ESL for both paid and volunteer tutors and instructors. She was an advisor to the I. U.'s 1984-85 ABE student anthology project, and she has taught classes in English composition at York College of Pennsylvania. As a part-time instructor at Project A.B.E., Carol also works with ABE/GED students.

Vicki Rutledge, George's wife, has taught ABE/GED students in York since 1979. A former high school yearbook advisor and speech coach, she was a Write-for-Life Associate for I.U. 12's 1983-84 310 project, The Write-for-Life Program and also assisted with the 1984-85 anthology project.

George, Carol, and Vicki have also taught English language arts classes at the secondary level.

See the newspaper article in this manual for more information about their present and future collaborations in the WRITE directions.

## What WE Believe

## About the Teaching of Writing in ABE/GED Programs

- The teaching of writing is one of the most basic responsibilities of all teachers.

With the addition of the essay component to the GED tests in 1988, ABE/GED instructors now have another good reason to be concerned about the writing skills of their students. Those writing skills will be tested directly *and* objectively. In programs where ABE/GED instructors specialize in teaching any or all of the other four GED test content areas, learning-centered writing activities can help to improve students' learning power and their general communications skills.

- The successful development of writing ability depends very much on a recognition of the close relationships that exist among all of the language arts (reading, speaking, listening, and writing).

Students who write about what they are reading and thinking become more perceptive readers. As they practice reading with a writer's eye, they automatically become better test takers.

- Students should learn to write in order to write to learn.

It is our job to help our students see how writing can enrich their personal growth and development. We are talking about a lot more than just taking notes, making lists, doing freewriting exercises, and making personal journal entries, but these kinds of writing are on the WRITE track.

- Writing skills are most effectively taught and learned in the context of actual writing.

WRITE-Now teachers purchase lots of inexpensive composition books and pencils. Then they encourage and help their students to fill those notebooks with their words, their voices, and their worlds.

- Writing is a process as well as a product.

Writing or composing does not usually occur in a straight-forward, linear fashion. It is often a process of discovering meaning. The process is one of accumulating words or phrases, putting them on paper, and then working from these bits and pieces to reflect on, structure, and possibly further develop what one means to say. Forward movement occurs only after one has some sense of where one wants to go.

- Students should write for different audiences and for different purposes.

We should encourage our ABE/GED students to do personal or private writing for themselves, informal and formal writing for personal, family, and business purposes, and more public writing for wider audiences. They should write for audiences beyond their instructors and their GED essay readers.

- Students should have experience with the entire spectrum of written discourse in order to develop a command over a wide range of language varities.

Our students should write for expressive, poetic or literary, and transactional reasons. They should write to inform, persuade, inspire, explore, and entertain.

- Students should experience the full range of writing occasions, from those that allow the writer to make all the decisions to those that present the writer with a list of expectations to be met.

Although we have a responsibility to help our GED students learn to write short essays, essentially 200-300 word persuasive and/or informative pieces, in order to cope successfully with the new GED essay requirement, we also have a responsibility to introduce our students to freewriting, learning-centered writing, and other less structured and sometimes less-threatening WRITE-Now experiences.

- The analytical study of grammar is useful in discussing with *some* students the options available to them as they work at improving the structure and style of their sentences in the editing phase of the writing process.

Don't throw away all of the old (pre-1988) Pre-GED and GED Writing Skills Test preparation texts! They might be very helpful as we work with *some students* who seem to profit from extra drill and formal grammar study. For most of our ABE/GED students, however, we believe that the best way to teach grammar *and* usage *and* mechanics is through the students' own writing efforts. The objective part of the new Writing Skills Tests is a very important step in the WRITE direction. We can take actual student writing and use some simplified error analysis/identification techniques similar to those in the new texts.

— The evaluation of writing should take place during each phase of the writing process and should be engaged in by the student writers themselves, with the help of their classmates and the teacher.

Having taught writing at the secondary, ABE/GED/ESL, and college levels, we heartily endorse process-conference approaches. From an andragogical perspective, it makes plenty of sense. WRITE-Now teachers can, by having short conferences with students before and during the process of producing a "public" piece , be more effective teachers of writing than those instructors who assign writing, collect it, and then massacre the writing with those terrible red pens.

— Learning to write well is a developmental process that continues throughout the student's schooling and beyond.

That is why our ABE/GED students should be encouraged to write for reasons other than preparing for the GED essay sample. If we share our writing problems and our Write-for-Life applications with our students and with one another, we will make a significant contribution to the WRITE cause.

— Even though the writing may contain some weaknesses and errors, a student's best efforts should always be shared with others if a "writing-to-be-read" objective is to be realized.

We need to provide audiences or readers for the learning-centered and less public writing of our students. Many kinds of writing are one-draft experiences which can be productive and often shared in non-threatening ways with students and staff.

— Writing which is actually made public, however, should be carefully proofread, with all errors corrected before it is "published" and shared with a wider audience in the school, home, and community.

Grammar handbooks, traditional language arts texts and workbooks, and resource books about various aspects and kinds of writing should be available for students and staff to read and discuss. When student writing has a Write-for-Life purpose and readers in and beyond the classroom, short and specific lessons on spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure are likely to be understood and appreciated.

— Write-for-Life activities,typically varying from a few minutes to thirty minutes, can and should be conducted during most ABE/GED class meetings.

Because writing can be a powerful learning tool across the curriculum, WRITE-Now teachers do not believe that the extra time they and their students are spending on one-to-one and group writing activities diminishes their effectiveness as content-area teachers. WRITE-Now teachers feel that they are helping to balance the basics. They don't think that their students are spending too much time in writing skills work and, for example, not enough time in science study. By balancing their instructional approaches with more writing-related exercises, ABE/GED practitioners can improve their students' writing skills without any loss in their teaching power in the other GED/pre-GED subjects.

— ABE/GED teachers can help their students to become more competent and confident writers.

We believe that ABE/GED students can, with large doses of the WRITE kinds of teacher support, demonstrate significant improvement in their writing skills in the three to six months that they are usually actively enrolled in our programs. That they often feel better about themselves as learners and communicators is a positive outcome we have seen many times.

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Based on the WRITE-Now project team's research, their collective teaching experiences, and the assumptions developed by the very capable staff of the West Chester (PA) public schools.

# LET'S FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT!

Question: How do you convert the person who has learned to hide and say, "I'm not going to write," into someone who thinks it's important, who recognizes the value of working at writing?

Mina Shaughnessy's Answer: I've tried to think of how to say generally how that happens; it's so different with different students. One thing I can say, after observing the effective teachers in my program and other programs, is that these teachers feel that the use of the language, the beauty of the language, the privilege of using it well, is a kind of trust. They're not saying to the student, "Look, I'm sorry you have to do this, the system requires this." They're saying, "I invite you into this universe of language, and I hope you will become a member of this special kind of skilled language group, and we're terribly fussy about whether we're going to admit you or not." Now that sounds terribly elitist, doesn't it? But that's just the reality.

We know that teachers in other fields feel this way. A teacher of geology, or biology, or psychology, will say, "Well, you're all here in this general course. Some of you may make it into the sophomore courses. This is a screening process, as far as I'm concerned. And this world, of which I'm giving you just a touch, this world in which I'm setting just the most modest standards, is an exciting, challenging, involving world of which you're not yet a member. But you can be."

Other professions don't seem to have any hesitations with that attitude, but we as a profession are so guilty, we feel so apologetic, we feel that writing is over, we keep trying to find new reasons why people ought to learn to write. And somehow, maybe this is a post-literate society, but there are many of us who feel that it's worth the fight.

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From: "Helping Inexperienced Writers: An Informal Discussion with Mina Shaughnessy The English Journal, March 1980. Permission to reprint authorized by NCTE. (Before Mina Shaughnessy died in 1978, she wrote a book that was to become one of the most influential texts in the teaching of composition, Errors & Expectations: A Guide for Teachers of Basic Writing, 1977.)

## Getting Off to the WRITE Start: Writing Directly to Students

Early in the project year, because we wanted to show students that we were willing to write with them and for them, we drafted the letter which appears below. Before we revised the letter and distributed it to all of our participants, we asked some ABE/GED students to read and respond to the first draft.

We were pleased to get some constructive criticism and some other words of encouragement from our student collaborators and editors. With their questions and comments in mind, we revised the letter and handed it personally to all of our students: ABE, GED, ESL, and Brush-up.

We include George's letter to Project A.B.E. students. Each of us revised and personalized our letters to students in other classes and programs. As often as we could, we tried to follow up the letter with a short review conference with each student. We wanted to make sure that they understood their roles as volunteers for the WRITE cause.

Although it is not as easy to keep up with project awareness activities in an individualized program as it is in a class situation, we made a special effort to invite all of our new enrollees to join the WRITE-Now Club. Most were interested and very willing to start with writing sample exercises.

## TYPED FIRST DRAFT

Dear Adult Student,

Are you taking an average of ~~anywhere~~ from ten to thirty minutes each day you are here at The Little House to work on your writing skills?

I believe that most ~~adults~~ learners, including me, can become better readers and thinkers if we ~~they~~ balance our reading and math studies/activities with ~~a~~ daily writing or study activity which involves a writing exercise. If we become better readers and thinkers, that means we will also be ~~become~~ better test takers. If the GED is one of your educational ~~golas~~ goals, so much the better. ~~Yes,~~ I believe that people who write on a regular basis - to themselves and/or to others - will do [illegible] better on most tests than people who are not ~~in~~ WRITE-Now ~~habits~~ [illegible].

As you may know by now, the new GED tests, which GED candidates who are PA residents will start taking in 1988 will include a short essay as part of the Writing Skills Test. No matter where you are in your ABE studies, the discipline and fun and challenge of writing on a daily basis is definitely going to help you whether you take~~s~~ your GED tests soon or after 1988 is upon us ~~here~~.

There are many ways in which you can work on your writing skills while you are a student at Project A.B.E. [illegible] Are you a member of the WRITE-Now Club? Does George have a special writing folder just for your work? [illegible] Are you making daily private entries in your WRITE-Now Notebook ~~Journal~~? Are you interested in writing a poem, a srory, or a short piece for the WRITE-NOW Journal? Have you been making learning log entries? Or dialogue journal entries for ~~George~~ me or another member of the staff to respond to?

Now is the WRITE time for all good students to come to the aid of their studies. Keep moving WRITE along by working on your writing skills at The Little House.

How do you get started? Tell George you want to join the WRITE-Now Club right now!

Dear Adult Student,

Are you taking an average of from ten to thirty minutes each day you are here at The Little House to work on your writing skills?

I believe that most of us, adult learners all, can become better readers and thinkers if we balance our reading and math activities with daily writing exercises. If we become better readers and thinkers, that means we will also be better test takers. If the GED is one of our educational goals, so much the better for the WRITE reasons! I also believe that people who write on a regular basis - to themselves and/or to others - will do better on most tests than people who are not WRITE-Now advocates.

As you probably know, the new GED tests, which Pennsylvania residents will have to take after January 1 of 1988, will include a short essay as part of the Writing Skills Test. No matter where you are in your studies, the fun and challenge of writing on a daily basis is definitely going to help you arrive at a clearer understanding of who you are and what you want to accomplish.

There are many ways in which you can work on your writing skills while you are a student at Project A.B.E. Are you a member of the WRITE-Now Club? Do I have a special writing folder just for you? Do you check it and add material to it at least once a week? Are you making daily entries in a WRITE-Now Notebook? Have you been writing learning log or dialogue journal entries for me or someone else to answer? Are you interested in writing a poem, a story, or a short piece of any kind for The WRITE-Now Journal?

Now is the right time for all good students to come to the aid of their studies! Keep moving WRITE along by working on your writing skills.

Do you want to know more? If you want to work on your writing skills as an important part of your studies at Project A.B.E., please talk to me or to another member of the staff. Do it right now!

George

. . . one of the problems about the way we have taught writing in this country is that we have tended to talk about it so much in terms of vocational necessity and so little in terms of how it helps a person make sense out of the world he has to live in. We have understated what's important.

Richard Lloyd-Jones
in Papers on Research About
Learning - Better Testing,
Better Writing, 1981.

# CHAPTER 2

## Where are you WRITE-Now?

### Collecting Writing Samples

After you have welcomed a new student, oriented him or her to the routine of your ABE/GED program, and given the student your usual diagnostic tests, you will probably have a feeling for when and how you should try to get an initial writing sample. How you go about getting the new student to do some writing and how you respond to what the student produces are two very important matters. The WRITE-Now approach that we suggest is a flexible, individualized way to obtain a direct writing skills sample.

### Read and Write

This technique is very non-threatening. Give the student some appropriate reading materials that he or she should be able to read independently. Allow the student to read a short article or brief passage. When the student finishes this usually silent reading, have an informal discussion about the passage to determine how the student seems to be comprehending the material. If all goes well, ask the student to read another selection. Tell him or her that you would like to read what he or she writes about the material.

What is the main point of the passage?
How does the material relate to your life?
What do you think about the situation?
Would you have approached the problem the same way?

Students will typically produce enough sentences or enough continuous prose for you to get a quick but probably accurate measure of their writing skills. Make sure that you say something positive about the student's initial writing sample. You can always find something good or encouraging to say if you focus on the meaning or message of the student's writing. Maybe you have had a similar experience, etc. If you respond enthusiastically to the student's sample writing, you will most likely have a new WRITE-Now Club member for your program.

ABE II Sample

> I find myself talking to people about things that have happened in my life since my divorce. When I was married, I was in my own little world, and nothing in life bothered me. I had someone to depend on, but I found out that a person should have some responsibilities in life. When I talk to people about their problems, I . . . .

Comment: This sample indicates that the student should be able to make normal progress toward the new GED writing skills competency level.

I like to have interesting newspaper articles and a variety of adult reading materials available for this task. If students sense that we teachers are comfortable with this procedure, they will not worry as much about how you will react to their writing. Of course, you should tell them in advance that, although spelling and punctuation are important writing skills, you realize that they are being asked to write under "test" conditions. Because they are expected to produce a writing sample without an opportunity to use a dictionary or to consult with anyone during the composing process, you will be more interested in what they have to say than in the surface features of how they said it. This little pre-writing instruction will go a long way toward establishing a WRITE-Now relationship from the start.

## Write about Yourself

Sometimes, especially when things are hectic in your classroom, you will want to have new students write about themselves. Here are a few invitations to write.

Tell me a few things about yourself.
What do you like to do in your spare time?
What are your interests?
Tell me about your family.
Why are you here? What are your ABE/GED goals?
Do you want to get a job/better job?

### ABE II Sample

I feel as though I am a very nice person. I like people and enjoy children. I have two children of my own, and I love them very much.

I love to cook, dance, and take care of children.

Some day I hope to have a job as a secretary. I would also like to learn more about what is going on in this world.

Comment: This student will soon be working in GED-level books. I plan to get some more-focused writing from her soon. I don't anticipate any problems WRITE-Now.

### ABE II Sample No. 2

I ended up coming here because it was my wife's idea. She thought it would be good for me to go for my GED. The main reason was to look ahead and try to better myself. The reason I say that is because I am unemployed due to a physical problem. But before I was told by the doctor that I had to look for another job, I was already thinking about going for my GED. If I had to do it all over again I would stay in school and get my high school diploma . . . .

Comment: This student does not write on a regular basis. He knows that he should work on his writing skills as part of his studies in our ABE program. He writes almost as he would speak - a fairly common problem for ABE/GED teachers to anticipate. Please note that some spelling errors have been corrected in the transcription process. Problems with verbs,tenses,and sentence structure are also common. The more he writes as a part of his studies, the more likely he will prove to be an average or even better writer.

## Write in Response to this Essay Topic

When your assessment of the student's academic skills tells you that you will have a GED candidate in a few months if things go well, you might want to jump right in with an actual essay topic and prompt. Many such essay topics and prompts are available in the new GED preparation texts. If the student seems to be comfortable with the idea that you want to get a writing sample, offer a topic, discuss the GED time limits, stress the "testing" conditions, and give the student plenty of lined composition paper. Let the student alone for a while, but make sure he or she is not having a writing-anxiety attack. If you detect such a fear-and-dread situation, calmly talk with the student about what you plan to do with the sample essay. We have rarely encountered a serious problem with this approach to obtaining an essay writing sample. We think that is so because our students trust us. They are not worried about what we will do to their papers or to them.

Pre-GED Sample

The one type of program I enjoy watching is soap operas. I think soap operas give me an idea on how different people with different backgrounds act and relate to each other. I like the excitement in a soap opera, such as the cliff hangers at the end of a certain day or week.

Soap operas give me a feeling of being in another world, a relaxing world, where there are not as many problems such as the ones people are faced with everyday.

I guess what watching soap operas says about me is that for an hour or so or a little longer, I like to escape from the world, and also the problems that I am faced with everyday.

Comment: Noting that this new student took only fifteen minutes from blank page to essay sample submission, I think she'll be ready to produce a three or better essay sample. I plan to encourage her to write learning-centered pieces and to work in the GED Writing Skills preparation texts. Punctuation and substantiation problems will be resolved.

Poetic Samples Allowed Here

It is not unusual for some new students to announce that they like to write. A student might offer to write something "creative." Another might write on and on, hoping that you will be impressed with a long, spontaneously penned sample.

Handle carefully whatever these poets and prose producers submit. There will be time for collecting more traditional writing samples as you work with them to plan a balanced study of reading, math, and writing-related materials. As my colleagues and I have seen, this kind of creative writing sample can often be just as valuable as more usual kinds.

GED Sample(Creative)

Sunshine

I love the sun, when it melts the snow,
and everything around has that sunshine glow.
The leaves return and all is green.
I gaze in amazement at God's mighty scene.
The sunshine on my face warms me up inside,
When the sun is shining, there's no place I'd hide.
I love the sunshine and I love a sunny day,
Its rays of love in God's special way.

Comment: We enjoyed the poem. Because the young poet-GED student passed his GED tests well ahead of 1988, we didn't worry about getting him into expressive and transactional modes. We believe that anyone who can compose such a poem in twenty minutes will be able to produce a conventional short essay, with WRITE-Now support, of course.

## Write your Opinion

A final and very easy method for getting new students to write is to ask for their opinion on a short quotation. Write or type the quotation at the top of a piece of lined composition paper and introduce the task.

How do you feel about this statement?

What does it say about life here and now?

How does it relate to you?

What do you think it means?

Sample Topic: The work of the world does not wait to be done by perfect people(from herbal tea box)

ABE II Sample

The work of the world is done by common people also. If you wait for only perfect people to do the work, It won't get done. It takes all kinds of people to do the work of the world - common and perfect people.

ABE I Sample

I know I'm not perfect. No one is. Some like to think they are. There may be one but you have to die.

ABE I Sample No. 2

Well yes I drink tea but do not drink herbal there is nothing wrong with it but I reather have plane tea. Yes tea is good for going out on picice or sitting around the house. Well I have this friend and she is very nice and . . . .

Comment: We know you were waiting for this last sample. Yes, it is off-target and full of mechanical problems, but we remain optimistic. After all, this is just a writing sample. The best is yet to come!

Do you have dozens of Manila folders, plenty of lined composition paper, and a good supply of pencils and pens? After collecting and responding to several writing samples from all kinds of ABE/GED students, you will be moving WRITE along.

## ABE/GED Student Writing Samples

Dear Student,

Thank you for taking the time to give us a writing sample. We are interested in seeing how our adult education students respond to the writing sample topic contained in the box below. This is not a test; it is a chance for you to practice your Write-for-Life skills.

> The automobile has certainly been responsible for many changes in the United States. Some of these changes have improved our lives and some have made life more difficult or unpleasant.
>
> Write a composition of about 200 words describing the effect of the automobile on modern life. You may describe the positive effects, the negative effects, or both. Be specific, and use examples to support your view.

### Instructions

1. Read all of the information accompanying the topic(in the box).
2. Plan your answer carefully before you write.
3. Use the space on the front or back of this sheet for notes and planning purposes.
4. Write your answer on the lined composition paper provided. Write your name on the top of the back(empty)side of the first sheet. Write on one side only. If you need a second sheet of lined composition paper, we have plenty!
5. Read carefully what you have written and make any changes that will improve your writing.
6. Do your best, without using a dictionary, to check your paragraphing, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and usage, and make any necessary corrections.
7. You will have 45 minutes to write on the question. Remember, there is no right or wrong answer! We want to see how you write in response to the sample essay topic. Write on!

Workshop Participant: I have heard you talk about learning log, personal writing, and dialogue journal entries, and it sounds like a great idea, but doesn't the process of keeping up with the WRITE-Now Journals take a lot of your time?

WRITE-Now Instructor: We asked ourselves that question when we first started to collect, read, and, when appropriate, respond in writing to our students' WRITE-Now Journals. We tried to keep track of the time we had to spend with the journals. What we discovered was that an hour or two a week was usually more than enough time for completing the procedure. It was and still is worth it to each of us.

Participant: I teach an evening GED class. Do you recommend WRITE-Now Journals for GED classes?

WRITE-Now Instructor: Yes, I certainly do. I jumped WRITE in with learning logs four years ago because I thought the process helped me and my GED students. At that time most of us didn't think we'd ever see the changes in the GED test that we are seeing now. WRITE-Now Journals or whatever you want to call them are an invitation to learning and discovery. They often lead to genuine growth in students' writing skills. At least, that's what we believe from having worked with hundreds of ABE/GED students.

Participant: Please tell us a little more about learning log entries.

WRITE-Now Instructor: Toward the end of a presentation or lesson we ask our students to take five or ten minutes to jot down the main points of the lesson - what they got out of the lesson. We also ask them to write about fuzzy or puzzling aspects of the lesson. These entries often serve as a much better quiz or examination than most examinations do. They serve as an exam of the teaching as well as the learning. The set of learning log entries tells the teacher a good bit about the effectiveness of his or her teaching. The teacher sees that there are usually many different and important learning activities going on in a given lesson.

Participant: Are you always happy with what your students write in their journals?

WRITE-Now Instructor: No, sometimes the learning log entries can be even less than constructively critical. When students write things that aren't easy to read in terms of how well the lesson went or how helpful it was, I need to take a good look at how and what I tried to teach. Maybe I went too fast or didn't give the class enough examples. Maybe I underestimated what they knew or could do. But I want to know when things are going well and when they aren't. I prefer not to know whose journal I'm reading when I study learning log entries. It is best to look at them collectively. That way I don't go back to a class with any bad feelings toward a particular student. If more than one entry points to a need for some re-teaching, I tend to take it seriously. I am still the instructor, the one who wants to give them their two-hours' worth.

Participant: You have urged us to promote the writing of dialogue journal entries in our ABE/GED classes. Can you give us or show us examples so that we can try to get started. I'm not very confident about my ability to respond effectively to student writing.

WRITE-Now Instructor: Welcome to the club. We've spent many hours reading and discussing several articles in Dialogue ,a newsletter which focuses on the uses of dialogue journals in many different educational settings and at many levels, from elementary classrooms through college and adult education classes, including ESL programs.

We recommend that you consider subscribing to this newsletter. For information, write to The Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd St., N.W., Washington, DC 20037. But, to respond more directly to your request, yes, we can give you some good examples of actual ABE/GED dialogue journal entries and instructor responses. As you read them, you'll see how learning log, personal, and dialogue journal entries often cross over or blend into one another. That used to bother us, but now we welcome the spontaneity and the honesty of this key WRITE-Now experience.

WRITE-Now Journal Sample Entries and Instructor Responses

George, ABE has been a big help to me, but I need to work more on my spelling, reading, and math. My spelling ability is very poor. I thing I'm OK in math but not that great. And my reading is fine untile I come to small words. They are harder to figure out than the big ones. You are all very understanding and very corporative with my poor abilities.

Instructor Entry: Thank you for the compliments! We enjoy working with you. In addition to the math and reading skills that you have been working hard to improve, you can also work on improving your spelling skills. We have several resources that you can study here. Say something to me about looking at some spelling/vocabulary books.

How are you doing with the reading book that you are using at home? You might wish to make a journal entry about a story or article in that book. Thanks for starting our dialogue journal.

Student: George, this is more than an ABE class for me. It is more like a concentration place for people in my situation. Sometimes, when I feel depress coming to The Little House, I leave here my old happy self again. Writing and talking to you and others relieves sOme of my depression. Working at my own pase I look forward to coming here everyday if I can.

**Instructor:** When you wrote that our program is more like a "concentration place," you made me think about how important it is for all of us to have a place where we can focus our thoughts and improve our study efforts. Thanks for making me do some thinking this morning.

*******

**Student 2:** A lot of people love to swim. There are a few that don't care for the water. I like the water. On a hot and sunny day, there's nothing I like better than to dive into a pool of cool water. It's a lot of fun, and it's very good exercise. It's good for the arms and legs. I believe it strengthens the back too. A lot of people swim just for the exercise. Some for the fun. I like both.

**Instructor:** If you can read my writing, we're off to the WRITE start! Your love of swimming makes sense to me. You appear to be the young, healthy, water-loving . . . . But enough about my need for exercise. Next time you are at the pool, maybe a writing topic will splash your way. Do you like to observe the way people act in a pool atmosphere? Do persons of different ages and stages have their own styles and kinds of behavior?

Of course, as I know you know, you can write about anything under or beyond the sun. You are off to a good start with you dialogue journal/ learning log.

**Student 2:** To answer your question about observing people, I had to laugh when I read what you wrote. It reminded me of when I used to hang out in the bars. I'm proud to say I don't anymore. I used to go there to play pool. I started to watch the people and was surprised to see how they acted.

There were grown adults you thought would act their age acting very immature. Not everyone acts this way, but many do. Just like at a concert, instead of enjoying the music and having a good time doing that, some people prefer getting wild and crazy. I've noticed that these people often drink too much or do drugs- or do both. It's very sad, because life has a lot to offer if you only give it a chance.

Instructor: That was a super journal entry, T. We have both apparently done our share of observing human behavior in similar environments. You. last sentence really says a lot about why we must continue to have goals and dreams. Write on!

*******

Instructor to Student 3: You make it easier for us because you make good use of your study time at The Little House. Keep writing.

Student 3: I had a good day in the class, getting to know the new students and their plans for the future. I thank God each day for such good friends, both among the staff and the students . . . .

Instructor: I appreciate the kind words and . . . . Let's talk more about the value of getting to know your fellow students and their plans. It's very much a key ingredient in the student progress recipe here at Project A.B.E. We hope that students will come often enough so that we can all support one another. Those people who spend only an hour or two a week . . . .

Student 3: In conversation today with a staff member at _______ some new thoughts came to me about what I might do after I get my GED. I might enter a training program at _______ if I can't get a job. My desire is to set a good example and to have a positive attitude concerning my studies here at The Little House.

Instructor: You are certainly working in the WRITE directions. I'm happy to read your thoughts on next steps. Remember, M., that we will try to keep you informed about post-GED options.

*******

The journal exchanges offered above are very good illustrations of the many kinds of purposes or functions for this key WRITE-Now process. We write to encourage our students, and they often do the same for us. We write to give them options, and they write about their needs and concerns. We write to see what they are thinking about, and they write to get us to think about their situations. And so it goes as we continue to champion dialogue journals in our ABE/GED/ESL programs.

**************

The work of the world does not wait to be done by perfect people.

- from herbal tea box

WRITE-Now Club Members were asked to take a few minutes to think and write about the statement from the tea box. Here is a sampling of their comments on and reactions to the statement.

If you wait for someone to do something, sometimes it doesn't get done.

- Louise G.

You have to do the best you can with what you have.

- Linda B.

It takes co-operation, groups of people working together, for the work of the world to be done.

My friend M. had a lot of papers to put out for the paper company. He could not do it by himself, so he had a group of people to help get them out on time.

- Mildred C.

There are different kinds of teas and different types of people. It takes all kinds!

- Donna R.

If you wait for perfect people to do the work, it won't get done.

- Moses S.

I am not perfect. Some people like to think they are, but no one is.

- Floyd R.

... until I open my eyes and realize we learn from our mistakes.

- Patricia W.

I have a friend. Her name is D. She is nice to be with, a really good friend to me. We have fun together. We are not perfect, and we don't know any perfect people.

- Billiejoe T.

No one is perfect in this world. God gave me a chance to make something of my life, so I am trying to get my GED. I hope to progress to higher and better things.

- Mary T.

I have a friend who is very nice to me and to others. It is hard to find a friend like that.

- Cheryl B.

The work of the world will never get done if you wait for me to do it. I am not a perfect person, but I try to do what needs to be done.

- Pam C.

---

We thank all of the WRITE-Now Club Members who contributed to this first short-but-important edition of THE WRITE-NOW JOURNAL.

## A WRITE-Now Journal Exchange

### My Dog, Jack

I became a proud owner of a dog that I soon named Jack. Jack followed my husband home one night, and my children and I fell in love with him. He was a very friendly dog - as long as you didn't harm my children or me.

One day he followed one of us out of the yard and a car hit him. I took him to the animal hospital, but the vet could not do anything for Jack. He had to put Jack to sleep.

It was a sad day for me and my children because we had lost a friend. That is what he was- a very good friend.

Staff entry: Thanks for writing about your dog, Jack. Can you tell me more about how Jack was a friend? How long did you have Jack?

Student entry:

Jack was a friend because, whenever I needed someone to watch over my children while I went to the store around the corner, Jack did it without complaining. When I had to put out the trash, he went in the yard with me, no matter what time of day or night. He was always there to protect my children and me.

When the children were in bed and everything was quiet, I could talk to him, and he would look up at me as if to say everything is going to be all right.

We had Jack for about a year and a half, but we had a lot of fun together.

Staff entry: Now you have just about all of the pieces you need to build your composition about Jack. Let's think about what goes where - in what order. Have you a good opener? I know you have a good middle. How about an ending?

Maybe you can do some underlining/numbering so that you can look at how the final draft might look. This is exciting!

This journal exchange between an ABE/GED student and her instructor was an exciting WRITE-Now experience because the student enjoyed the opportunity to write about a family pet. It was also rewarding to the instructor because the student did respond with good examples when she answered the entry questions. Readers could now see Jack and share the writer's feelings for him. But what happened next was a surprise to the instructor. The student didn't want to continue with the piece. Rather than draft anything more on that topic, the reader asked if she could write about her Mother's Day memories.

When ABE/GED students want to move on to other writing topics and projects, their instructors should remember that ownership is very important. If a student wants to write about something else, that is the way it should go. It is clear in the above exchange that the instructor was beginning to revise and envision the finished piece published in some way; the writer had other plans.

## Mother's Day

Mother's Day was a beautiful day for me. I have always wanted a nice yard, and I have a nice big one now. For a Mother's Day gift my daughter got me an umbrella and chair set. Also, as a gift from my son, I received a picnic table.

My granddaughter and her husband came down from Boston to be with me on

Mother's Day. We all went to church, and after church we came back to my apartment and had a cookout in my yard. I had my mother over, and we all had a nice time.

To top it off, my best friend from Texas called me to wish me a happy Mother's Day.

I am so thankful to God for letting me see another Mother's Day and to have my mother and family there with me. It was truly a beautiful day.

## Back to Jack!

Having written about her Mother's Day experience, the student reviewed what she had written about Jack, and, upon discussing the piece with her instructor, she worked toward a fuller, more polished effort. Here is a selection from the revised work.

* * * * * * * * * * *

When I had to do my wash, I would have to go down into the cellar. While I was there, Jack would watch the children. He would just sit there and watch. If someone came up to the gate, or even walk by, Jack would bark to let me know that someone was there - even though who ever it was wouldn't be near my gate!

One day my husband was wrestling with one of my sons. Because Jack didn't know if he was going to hurt him or not, he went after my husband. That is because I had told Jack to watch over my children. So you see, Jack was a very good babysitter.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Although the developing piece has some syntactical problems, it won't take much student-instructor collaborating to get it ready for sharing with other students and staff. Other readers will get to know Jack. They will also have a better understanding of and appreciation for the writer. Best of all, the writer will see herself as a person with something to say and a way to say it WRITE-Now.

*******

In-Service Notes and Comments -

# Examples of Learning-Centered Writing in ABE/GED Classes

## Write-for-Life

## L.I.U. No.12

Our ABE/GED students were asked to write for a few minutes on variations of "What have I learned?" ,"How well have I learned it?" and"What do I think about what I have read or what we have discussed?".

### An Example From Science

The subject of a teacher-lead lesson was photosynthesis. The teacher presented a short lesson at the chalkboard, asked students to read a few pages in a GED science preparation text, and then gave the class a short objective quiz from a GED science preparation exercise book. At the start of the next class session, the teacher asked the students to write about what they thought they knew on the topic.

"It has to do with living things. The change of carbon dioxide into oxygen through green plants."

****

"I can't remenber the formula, but I think it had yo do with stages in growth of plants and trees. And different things needed for proper growth of them."

****

"Sunlight on plants helps the color. The leaves take up the light through its openings and help make the color of the plant."

****

"I wasn't here."

****

"Help!"

"Photosynthesis is how plants make food by taking sunlight and ..."

****

"I don't remember anything."

****

The key to effective teaching is knowing when to review or re-teach important concepts that are basic to whatever is being studied. What did this teacher do? Yes, he went back to his materials, re-presented the lesson, and gave another quiz on the subject. The students rewarded their teacher and themselves by demonstrating that they had improved their comprehension of the topic. Students can make quite clear their need for individual attention, and they can establish a working dialogue with the teacher on how and what they are learning.

## An Example From English/Writing Skills

The instructor prepared enough copies of an article about writing "myths" so that his students could read and think about the ideas after class at their own pace. During the next class session, after a short discussion of the article, students were asked to do some learning-centered writing on one of several positions taken by the author, Frank Smith. The position most often selected by the ABE/GED students was "You must have something to say in order to write." Their responses were very encouraging for the WRITE reasons.

"While writing begins with a thought, it may develop into a lot more than the original thought. You may feel you have very little to say. While thinking about a subject, your thoughts may be fleeting and haphazard. Writing may force you to focus in and think a lot more deeply."

****

"I don't agree with this statement because we already know that a lot of the time we don't think we have anything to say or rather, to write about, and then, given time to think about it, we start to write. Suddenly ideas start to appear on paper, our thoughts at the moment even though they may not be important."

****

"You can write without really having anything to say, at least when you start to write. The writing will come from the heart instead of the mind. When you free-write and you flow along with the words and the feelings, you will probably have to go back and read what you wrote anyway."

****

"I disagree with this statement because writing comes from your mind once you start writing. If you take the time and energy, you could make a simple sentence into a whole paragraph. You have to relax,and the train of thought passes right through to your paper."

****

A stimulating discussion followed the instructor's review of this learning-centered writing about writing. Because the students understand that their writing during these activities will not be evaluated for "correctness" and grammar, they take more risks and do more thinking.

## An Example From Social Studies

As a part of a short lesson on GED behavioral science exercises, the class discussed and wrote about the term "aptitude." This learning-centered writing activity helped the students realize that interest is perhaps the most important part of aptitude. A related discussion during the next class meeting produced some student creative writing drafts. A Write-for-Life class can't progress without a Write-for-Life teacher.

35.

# THE HONEST ABE

SPRING, 1984 VOLUME THREE NUMBER ON
THE ADULT EDUCATION STUDENT NEWSPAPER
OF
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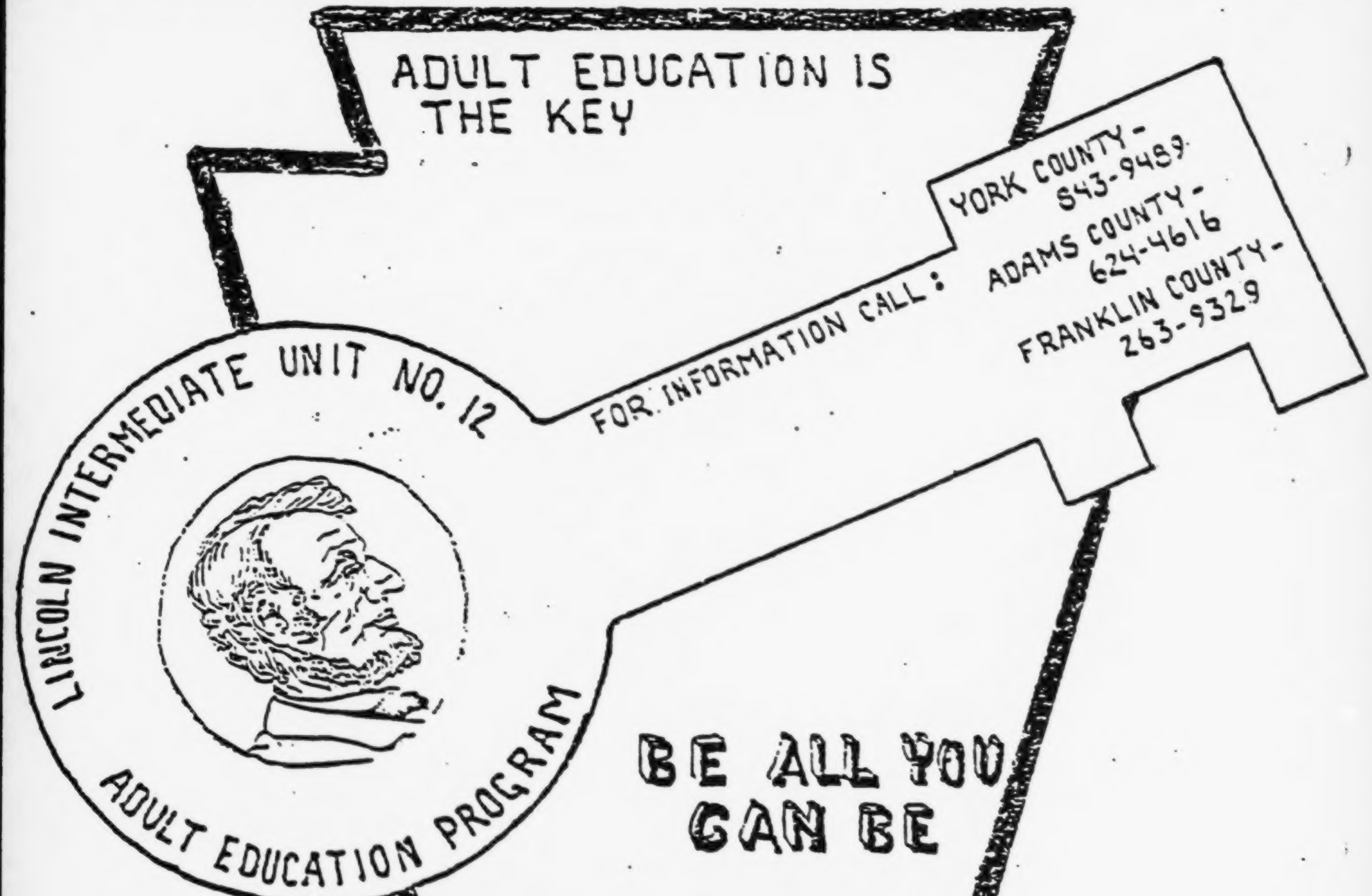
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## WRITE-FOR-LIFE PROGRAM INVOLVED ADULT STUDENTS IN LEARNING-CENTERED WRITING ACTIVITIES

During the 1983-84 academic year, several adult students and their instructors participated in the Lincoln Intermediate Unit's Write-for-Life Program, a special one-year project supported by funds from the PDE's Special 310 program. Adult students and staff from York, Adams, and Franklin Counties participated in either control or experimental classes under the direction of Mr. George Rutledge, the project's coordinator and a member of the LIU's adult basic education staff.

One popular writing-for-learning activity was the keeping of learning logs - journals or notebooks of both in-class and out-of-class entries about the thoughts, feelings, and personal growth and development of the writer, always an adult student in one of the LIU's ABE or GED classes. Here are a few sample selections from Learning Logs submitted by some of George's students in his second semester GED class at Eastern High School in York County. Students were encouraged to do focused freewriting about their ABE/GED studies and related concerns as adult education students helping themselves to take important "next steps" in their lives.

## LEARNING LOG ENTRIES

### General Observation - Avis S.

When I announced to my children that, after thirty-three years and various courses, I was going back to school, I had no idea I would be asked to do the very thing that had been hardest for me in junior high. You guessed it - writing!

### Writing Skills - An Invitation - Faye S.

You are invited to a tupperware party sponsored by the Golden Rule Class of Bethany United Methodist Church, Mt. Rose Ave. and Ogontz St., York, PA on Tuesday evening, April 17 at 7:30 P.M. in the church social hall.

### Basic Skills On-the-Job - Janet B.

After giving it some thought, I guess I'll try to write a little about a job I once held. I worked for a short time as a salesclerk in a department store in the Men's and Boy's Dept. It was only a part-time job over the Christmas holidays, although they did keep me on as an employee into January to help take inventory. Chalk up one basic skill - a little math for inventory!

### Thoughts on Math Progress - Tammy R.

GED class tonight was interesting but confusing. I have such a hard time understanding fractions. Sometimes I feel as though I am the only one in the world who can't understand math - even simple math. Sometimes I am so uncomfortable in class. I am terrified to be called on when we have math. I have this stupid fear that I will be called on, and I will give the wrong answer. I hate not feeling confident.

### On Writing for Communication - Janet B.

When I think of the word "writing," I immediately think of something my husband and son always say: "I can't write; I have to print everything I write." Through the years I have always agreed with my son. His "writing" is completely illegible, and I have always told him that he is better off printing.

Now he is a young man in the Army, and writing is his only means of communication with his family and friends. Now I think that it is not important that he just prints - only that he does write to us.

The Dialogue Journal has also been used with the English As a Second Language student who hopes eventually to accomplish his/her goal of acquiring the GED. Like some native Americans, the ESL student finds it difficult to "get started" -- to go beyond the prescribed textbook question and answer method. The Dialogue Journal helps to ease the initial pain of putting one's own ideas on paper in English in an extended form, perhaps for the first time. Here we are going to present some student-teacher interactions and look at the way some of our ESL students have gained confidence through the use of the Dialogue Journal as they begin their Write-Now journey in English.

When Jose was first encouraged to use his Write-Now notebook, he responded, "I can't. I can't. I can't." "Yes, you can," said the teacher, "Just write that - I can't. I can't. I can't." "No! No!" said Jose. "Why not?" said the teacher. "I can't spell," said Jose. Actually, the teacher was not quite sure whether Jose could write anything extemporaneously or not since he had never done it before. But she did not let Jose know she had any doubts. She said, "That's okay. I don't care about the spelling right now. You just write to me, and I'll write back to you." Although he had been protesting vehemently, at this point he immediately began to write, as follows:

> I got a V-C R in ley a way in hills. this costs me $300. dollars. I'am going to pay every month $25.00 dollars. Went I finish to payed, I'm going to star to recorded movies, shows, wrestlin mach, karate movie, western movies, mafia movie, mistery movie.

Having read Jose's "first try", I hope you, the reader, are not disappointed; for I, the teacher, was delighted. The spelling is not impossible, the punctuation is great, the lack of capitalization is common to the student's native language, "I'am" "Went" and "payed" are typical ESL errors, and most important of all, there is an intelligible communication in writing, which can be developed. Since we meet with our students nearly everyday, we have an ideal setting in which to walk with our students at a leisurely pace through the developmental writing process. Jose has a long distance to travel before reaching his GED goal, but at the time of this publication, he is much more fluent and grammatically more correct, and he _is_ on his way. --he is _writing_.

Let us now look at the progress another student made from journal entry one to journal entry four over a two-week period. "I buy in a store that. I see some money down to guard money
My job is very difficult but I must make a good job. beace I like"
This was That Phan's entire first entry. After a ten-minute struggle, we have two attempts at a beginning. Three classes later he wrote

> I like to drive car because, I often go to
> shopping and I go to anywhere I don't
> liked my neighborhood.because it's very
> noisy. I want to get a good job
> I borrow some moeny from the bank
> I will buy the car. and the house

The teacher's hand-written journal entries appear to be modeled by the ESL student, which helps the student to quickly develop more fluidity, as is exemplified also by our next student.

Yuki's first two journal entries were as follows:

(1) It's cloudy. 71°F.
Whould you tell me about ___ Fair which open
this Saturday?
Would you tell me about an election
this October?

(2) It's cloudy. 76°F.
I saw a party at court house before I came here.
Could you tell me what was doing them?

These questions required quite extensive answers, and I began to wonder who was getting the writing practice. I was also concerned that perhaps this informal dialogue method would not be successful with students who are accustomed to a rigorously formal style of education in their native land. To my relief, the third entry was as follows:

> I went to the dures airport in Verginia with my husband yesterday. My mother might come to the U.S.A from Japan. We'll have to pick her up to the dures airport. It's a practice.
>
> We had two-hour drive. After that we went to pass through Washington D.C. to Bartimore in Maryland. We had a good time. Winter will be becoming soon. Fall is a sentimental season. "Red leaves", I like fall but I feel sentmentalism.

I was really puzzled by the word "practice". The ESL student is frequently translating his/her thoughts from his/her native language, and when unable to think of an appropriate English word, the bilingual dictionary is used. Sometimes the dictionary is just plain wrong; at other times, the student makes the wrong choice. It's very difficult to sift through multiple meanings and shades of meanings. In this case, I told the student that I did not understand, and suggested that perhaps there was another word with the same meaning in Japanese. She gave me a second choice,"inspection". Now we can understand that the student and her husband were trying to familiarize themselves with the location and layout of Dulles Airport before the arrival of the student's mother.

All of the Japanese students I have met have had excellent pronunciation skills, but they cannot hear the sound of the letter "l" as we say it. Rather, they hear an "r", speak an "r", and as you have no doubt noted in the above entry ("dures" and "Bartimore") write an "r". I recall the first time this came seriously to my attention, I was concerned that a student had a problem with her liver, when actually she had been on an outing to the river. In the above entry, Yuki spells "fall" and "feel" correctly because she is very familiar with these words and has learned to spell them, although she frequently pronounces them "far" and "fear". One readily comprehends the importance of helping the student to hear and to speak the "l" sound when one compares "I fear sentimentalism" to "I feel sentimental." In addition, as a writing facilitator, you can see the influence of what is heard and what is spoken upon what is written and read.

Spelling is a subject many of us would rather avoid. If spelling is a challenge for many native Americans, it is an incomprehensible phenomenon for some ESL students. Beyond some simple rules, I occasionally suggest to the student that they try to photograph the words as they are reading and writing them in their texts and workbooks. Some people find this helpful. Following are excerpts from the writings of two ESL students with major spelling difficulties:

(1) Martin is from Poland. He had no trouble learning our alphabet. He speaks quickly, fluently, but with frequent grammatical errors. He has spelling difficulties in his own language.

> In a 1985 may 1 I and my famile we came to United Stade. First we live with one famile. We live with them for thre weks. Lader we move to anodher famile.
>
> ......
>
> When I and ny sister go to school evry bory loking at us beks we dont spek English. .... Evry bory make funy from my. I don't know wy?

(2) Naheed is from Afghanistan. She has had to learn a completely new alphabet and sound system. Her pronunciation is quite good. As one looks at her writing, one can see a number of things going on, e.g. sometimes all the letters are there, but in a scrambled order; at other times it is evident that she is trying to spell what she hears.

> I come form Afghanistan. I lik my country. I levi in the U.S.A. I and my mother com to English clas. I lik stde English bat for me is vrey defechlt, becas my langueg is prsien. My anthr brothers and my sestar go the school. The are stdey English vrey good, becis the are smale.

The ESL student, like the native American, needs a lot of practice - writing, writing, writing. I usually do not ask the student to write on a specific topic for quite a while until he/she becomes comfortable writing informally about his/her own real-life situations, or topics of his/her own choosing. Most frequently the student writes about something in his immediate past, present, or future,using relatively simple sentence structures. As more complex forms evolve through study and practice, we approach the beginning of our more formal writing development, leading to the writing of the GED essay.

The immediate teacher-feedback to the student's journal entry seems to please each student immensely. They eagerly pick-up their Write-Now notebooks, read what has been written to them, and often begin their next entry without any prompting. The teacher's response has been informal, referring to things the student has written, asking questions, and always making some positive comments and encouraging the student to continue writing. This "tender-loving-care" is very important.

Only a few minutes is needed for each journal entry. Therefore, the dialogue-journal process does not seem burdensome, while it creates a fine student-teacher rapport, and aids motivational factors for both student and teacher. The fluency of the student's writing and speaking is implemented, as well as the more technical aspects of writing. The dialogue allows the teacher to discuss aspects of the student's writing in her response-entry, or include the student's special problems in a class lesson without "correcting" the student's dialogue-journal entries. Everyone writes and has fun doing it!

# WRITING ACROSS/THROUGHOUT THE CURRICULUM

## CHAPTER 4

# THE WAC-in-ABE/GED CHAPTER

(Writing Across/Throughout the Curriculum)

Upon reading a back issue of the Virginia English Bulletin, a special publication subtitled, "What We Know about the Teaching of Writing," we knew that we wanted to develop a WRITE-Now chapter around the very stimulating article by Denny Wolfe and Carol Pope.

We thank the Virginia Association of Teachers of English for authorizing our reproduction of "Developing Thinking Processes: Ten Writing-for-Learning Tasks Throughout the Curriculum." It appeared in the Spring 1985(Volume 35, Number 1)issue of the Virginia English Bulletin.

# Developing Thinking Processes: Ten Writing-For-Learning Tasks Throughout the Curriculum

Denny Wolfe
Carol Pope

> *Unless and until the mind of the learner is engaged, no meaning will be made, no knowledge can be won.*
>
> —Ann Berthoff, "Is Teaching Still Possible? Writing, Meaning, and Higher Order Reasoning," *College English* (December 1984), p. 744.

Much has been written recently, in professional journals and elsewhere, about writing as a powerful way of learning in all school subjects.[1] Many teachers who have read this literature, or who simply have heard about the concept of writing to learn, are generally persuaded that writing is indeed an important way of realizing, clarifying, defining, reflecting, imagining, inventing, inquiring, organizing, interpreting, discovering, decision-making, problem-solving, and evaluating—in short, an important way of thinking and learning. Nearly any successful learner can attest to that fact. If it is true that we learn by hand (action), eye (image), and brain (making and revising meaning through language), then writing is significant as a learning and teaching method because it is the only language process that involves all three of these functions simultaneously.[2]

John Dewey famously observed that we learn what we do. An apt corollary might be that we own what we learn; otherwise, real learning does not occur at all— beyond test day, anyway. Providing students with experiences that require the development of their thinking abilities is obviously crucial to the educational process in any discipline and at all grade levels. Just as writing and instruction in writing aid the development of fluency, thinking and guidance in thinking aid the development of learning. Writing is a tool by which critical and creative thinking abilities are acquired, developed, and honed. For example, when students are thinking—really thinking— they use their own language (not the teacher's or someone else's) to formulate ideas, opinions, perspectives, and conclusions. Manipulating language and

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symbols in the head and putting words on paper enable students to order information and make meanings.

Thinking and learning are enhanced by using writing to organize information, sequence it, analyze it, study relationships, and perceive errors in logic. Dialectical thinking—the process which examines how bits of information or sets of assumptions prove and disprove each other—is also developed when students apply critical thinking abilities to explore, through writing, possible outcomes of alternative choices and decisions.

Perception is another important thinking ability to be addressed through writing—that thinking ability which Edward de Bono calls "first-stage thinking."[3] Students explore and think about their perceptions in order to understand how they make meaning of their observations. Berthoff declares that at this stage, "Students can discover that they are already thinking; by raising implicit recognitions to explicit differentiations, they can, as it were, feel the activity of their minds."[4] In addition, recording perceptions as they explore and think about them helps students make the process of generalizing tangible and accessible for reconsideration.

Following are ten concrete suggestions for teachers to consider as ways of helping students use writing as a vehicle for learning throughout the disciplines and across grade levels. These suggestions, taken as a whole, can enhance the development of thinking abilities by requiring students to explore what they know and do not know, generalize to determine assumptions and principles, and/or apply these assumptions and principles within a variety of contexts. The primary advantage of these suggested writing tasks is that they invite students to become active participants in their learning by ordering and making meaning of prior knowledge, as well as inventing new knowledge—that is, knowledge which is new to them, if not to the world.

## Writing to Identify Personal Goals

Administrators and supervisors expect teachers to establish instructional goals; a fitting corollary, therefore, is that teachers should expect students to establish learning goals. At the beginning of a term (a semester or a grading period)—even at the beginning of a week—teachers might ask students to write down several goals which they hope to achieve during that period of time. The goals may have to do with keeping up with assignments better, reading more, studying more at home, working to improve study skills, paying closer attention in class, talking less to one's peers at inappropriate times, participating more fully in class discussions, seeking needed help from teachers and others, and organizing to get things done more effectively. These are mere examples; if the goal-setting is to be useful, students must think inventively and introspectively about their own needs and interests. The goals should address school-related matters, focusing on academic learning.

## Why Write in ABE/GED Class?

Write to identify personal goals.

Write to comprehend reading material.

Write to clarify and reflect.

Write to define one's own learning.

Write to summarize.

Write to apply, to consider the practical value of one's learning.

Write to inquire. Write questions and needs.

Write to plan and organize.

Write to meet one's own needs and interests.

Write to evaluate. Write about what has been learned and what has been interesting.

****************

Writing can become a powerful force in helping students personalize knowledge and become active learners.

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Dear Student,

Please take a few minutes to read and think about the WRITE reasons we have listed above. Pick one or two WRITE reasons that you like or can support from your own life. Take another few minutes to write about that reason or reasons. Try to give us an example. Explain why you do that kind of writing or why you would like to do a particular kind of writing as part of your ABE/GED studies. You may begin on the bottom of this sheet and continue on the back. Thanks for your WRITE-Now contribution.

ABE Staff

Notes/Comments on Possible ABE/GED Applications -

I give my permission to the WRITE-Now team to use my writing in the WRITE-Now project. I understand that only my first name and the initial letter of my last name will be used in the project materials.

Name______________________________

Date_______________

## In Their Own Words: ABE/GED Students Write About the WRITE Reasons

### Write to identify personal goals.

I am writing to identify my personal goals. I am coming to this ABE program because I need an education and a lot of help to get my GED. I have been a truck driver most of my life and now I need to learn a new trade because I had a shoulder injury. I can no longer drive trucks.

I am going to take training to be an electrician so I don't have to lift anything very heavy.

Some people may think truck driving is not a hard job. They are very wrong, because I drove five hundred miles every night, putting in twelve to fourteen hours every night. I also dropped and hooked a set of doubles three times a night. A lot of people could not take that kind of work. That is how I hurt my shoulder - dropping and hooking doubles.

*******

I want to get my GED and get a job that pays well so that I don't have to worry as much as I do right now.

*******

I want to get my GED because I know it will help me to progress to higher and better things. It will also make me feel good about myself. When I go for a job and they ask me if I graduated or have a GED, I'll be able, with a big smile, to say that I have my GED.

*******

I would like to have a good job in a clothing store. Some day I would like to have my own clothing store so that my daughter will have something to take over when she grows up. She can take over and make it bigger and better.

### Writing to Comprehend Reading Material

Underlining is a common practice in "academic" reading. But even if they do not underline, most readers develop some idiosyncratic system for noting what's important in material they read. Responding through writing may be a far more effective way of comprehending and remembering than underlining, making abbreviated marginal notes, or copying. Writing is also a powerful way by which students can come to have a sense of ownership of concepts and information. Students should be encouraged to write, to digest, to paraphrase, and to interpret what they read. By writing about their reading, students may often better comprehend a sentence, a paragraph, or a longer passage than by other strategies only, such as re-reading or reading at a slower rate than usual. Both during and after reading, students should write to explore and make their own meanings from the printed pages.

## In Their Own Words: ABE/GED Students Write About the WRITE Reasons

Write to comprehend reading material.

You can learn so much by reading. For example, I was working in the science book on some questions about heart attack and its warning signs. If you would ever have any of the symptoms, you would know what to do.

I think you can learn so much from books or other reading materials. I do a lot of reading, and I can always learn something new. I enjoy reading. It is a good way to pass the time.

*******

Take time to enjoy activities such as walking. Walking can be as much fun as any basic sport. Walking helps to relax and strengthen the body's muscles. Just start yourself in motion and adjust your walking to the conditions. Gradually walk a mile and then two or three as you become a walker.

Becoming a professional walker is meaningful . . . .

*******

Boys will sometimes get out in bad company and steal and other things. You send them to school and instead they'll be somewhere else. That's where the trouble begins with boys, but . . . .

*******

**Writing to Clarify and Reflect**

During any classroom learning activity—listening to a lecture, watching a film, participating in discussions, or engaging in individual projects—teachers might periodically ask students to stop what they are doing in order to write for purposes of clarifying and reflecting. They write to clarify in their minds—in their words—a piece of information, a feeling they might be experiencing, a vaguely formed thought, an image, a direction or a set of directions that might describe a sequence of steps or a generalization. They write to reflect upon what they have done, heard, said, or seen, and upon what lies ahead in a particular learning activity. In this way, students are invited to think about what they have done, are doing, and will do. What students sometimes perform in a mindless, mechanical way in the classroom becomes a thoughtful, provocative, decision-making, problem-solving, and engaging learning task or set of tasks.

In Their Own Words: ABE/GED Students Write About the WRITE Reasons

Write to clarify and reflect.

I get scared when I feel pressure and I think I can't do it. So I pray and hope I'll get through the crisis. I always think I'm saying or doing the wrong thing. But now I have my book. I read it everyday to give me the strength to make it and deal with things. I sometimes don't understand about life. I do know that there has to be growth. Without growth there is no life. Today I will live.

*******

My attitude has changed. When I first came here to get my GED, it was mostly because my job plans required that I get through the GED tests. Now I want the GED because it is something I want for myself. Now I am working with more of a determination. I know now that it really helps to have your GED.

*******

## Writing to Define One's Own Learning

At the beginning of a lesson or a class, students might be asked to write to remember, to select, and to record what they feel was their most important learning about a given lesson or subject the day before. By focusing attention on previous learning, this kind of writing prepares students for what is coming up next. At the end of a lesson or a class, writing to define one's own learning helps students discover how effective their immediate classroom experiences might have been. And later, when their parents or friends ask, "What-did-you-learn-in-school-today?" students may be better prepared to give a refreshingly substantial answer. Finally, teachers can help students use this kind of writing to express how they are learning. In this way, students might gain insights into their own peculiar learning styles and preferred working environments. They might be asked to use this kind of writing to find out what time of day they are most able to work and learn best; how much time they can spend working most productively at a single stretch; whether they work best in absolute quiet or with, perhaps, soft music; whether they work best with others or in groups; and what sort of working place and space they feel they need in order to work most productively and efficiently. Although the structure of schooling obviously cannot altogether accommodate individuals' preferred working styles, students can profit from writing to learn about those styles for efforts they make outside of school.

## In Their Own Words: ABE/GED Students Write About the WRITE Reasons

Write to define one's own learning.

When I started going to this school, I could not read or write very good. I tried hard to learn. Now I can read and write a little better.

We had to work hard and couldn't go to school all the time when I was little. My father died when I was just a little girl. All of the children had to work to help Mother get money to take care of us. When we went to school, all of the other children were so far ahead of us and it was hard to learn what was going on. I just looked from one to the other, not knowing what they were talking about. They just passed me on and on. I wasn't learning anything.I was just there until it was time to come home.

*******

Venus - 18,000,000 miles out in space. Orbiting slowly and freely with the other dense planets, its color reflected odd images from afar and stranger colors as one came closer(student goes deeper into creative sci-fi fantasy writing).

*******

### Writing to Summarize

Writing to summarize means, for example, writing to indicate the structural plot of a story; the most significant information in a textbook chapter or magazine or newspaper article; the major message or point in an essay; the nugget of a lecture, a record, or a tape recording; the visual story line of a film; the hard-won discovery of a laboratory experiment; or the essence of an oral discussion in the classroom. More than the other writing tasks included here, writing to summarize is externally oriented and directed. Although it is a writing task which certainly may have expressive features, it is one in which the writer often is trying to get at the heart of someone else's intention or set of intentions. The student writer's interest here is to reduce something quite large to its lowest terms. Of all the writing tasks among these ten, writing to summarize is probably the most conventional. Students are frequently required to write summaries, but usually such writing is for testing purposes only. What we are suggesting here is (1) writing summaries far more frequently than is currently the case and (2) writing summaries for learning purposes rather than solely for testing purposes.

In Their Own Words: ABE/GED Students Write About the WRITE Reasons

Write to summarize.

U.S. leaders indicated today in advance that there will be no promises from this summit. The talks will be about attempts to have the U.S. and Soviet reps. come to an agreement on the removal of hundreds of missiles from Europe and Soviet Asia. They will also talk about the protection of navigation lanes in the Persian Gulf. The summit is to be held . . . .

*******

Dr. Fry says that laughter is good. Intense laughter can easily double the heart rate. Laughter gives many muscles a good workout. Laughter also kills pain.

*******

## Writing to Apply

This task is not one which requires students to fill out forms. Rather, it one for which teachers ask students to write about the practical value of their learning. All of the facts students absorb in school, all of the discoveries they make, all of the concepts they acquire, and all of the attitudes they develop must have value beyond the teacher's grade book. But what value? Students are often quite bold in challenging teachers to tell them about the practical value of their learning. This writing task occasionally can place the onus on students to speculate about the utility of what they learn in school. As a result of such writing—if it becomes the basis now and then for classroom discussion—teachers might discover new reasons for what they are teaching. Conversely, teachers might also discover that something they are teaching deserves a much lower (or higher) priority.

Write to apply, to consider the practical value of one's learning.

I don't think there are any differences between raising a boy or a girl. You have to teach children to have respect for others and to assume responsibilities.

You don't need a lot of money to be a foster parent. What you do need is a house with love in it. The rules you set for a child to go by, you have to stick to yourself.

*******

What really has me into reading and writing a lot is the good book I'm reading. When I can't get ahold of that book, I go on to something else. I hope to spend some time soon with the GED Reading Skills text.

*******

## Writing to Inquire

For many years educators have been in general agreement about the value of inquiry methods of teaching and learning. Yet, the potential which inquiry holds as a method of instruction has never been fully realized. At least two reasons exist for the limited use and checkered career of inquiry in the classroom: (1) many teachers have given neither themselves nor their students enough time and practice to develop the skills of inquiry; (2) some teaches have over-used the approach (Johnny: "Ms. Smith, may I go the bathroom?" Ms. Smith: "I don't know, what do you think about that?"). Of course, students will not learn to develop curious, inquiring minds if they are not urged—even pressed—to ask questions. Oral language is often not sufficient to promote deep and rich questioning. "Are there any questions?" is a query which frequently is met with silent response. It is often too easy for students to hide in the group and keep quiet. On the other hand, stopping what students are doing (listening to a lecture, viewing a film, reading in class) and asking them to write a question tends to elicit many responses. The questions might have to do with (1) something students do not understand; (2) something they would like to know more about; (3) a speculation about a relationship between what they are working on now and something they have done in the past; or (4) a need to have clarified the purpose regarding why they are doing a particular activity. Of course, many more possibilities exist and will emerge when teachers "de-brief" their students in class after the writing has occurred.

In Their Own Words: ABE/GED Students Write About the WRITE Reasons

Write to inquire. Write questions and needs.

Can I work on getting my driver's license? Do you have stuff that I can study? I hope to take my test soon.

*******

When can I take my GED tests? Will I be able to finish my GED testing before the end of this summer? Do you think I am ready to take and pass the GED tests?

*******

### Writing to Plan and Organize

All of us, from time to time, make lists of "things to do." Busy people find this practice necessary—even a means of vocational or professional "survival." Teachers often give students direction and advice about planning and organizing themselves for school work. But beyond the "teacher talk," too many times little else happens. As an important follow-up to such direction and advice, teachers can urge students to prepare weekly plans or schedules, indicating what tasks lie ahead and how students propose to manage their time and energies to get their work done well. In this way, students can use writing to realize the efficacy of planning and organizing as an approach to becoming more effective in their school work, as well as in their lives outside of school. Gradually, many students will learn to depend upon such writing to discover the details of what needs to be done and the best procedures for doing it. As a corollary, this kind of writing enables students to practice decision-making and problem-solving skills—perhaps more than any of the other writing tasks suggested here.

Write to plan and organize.

I am planning a birthday party for my niece. First I have to make a list of all the material I need to decorate the hall. I also need to make a list of the food we are planning to serve. Then I have to make a note so that I will remember to be there on time.

*******

I plan my shopping by preparing store lists of the things I need.

*******

Well, it's pretty bad out there today. I had plans to do some washing, but I can't because it's raining. I was going to sweep off the sidewalk, but it's raining. I was going to have a nice walk, but . . . .

*******

## Writing to Meet One's Own Needs and Interests

In the late '60's and '70's, when reading was the language process getting the most attention in educational literature and in "curricular reform," many teachers began to hold "read-ins" in their classes. More elaborately, many schools established what became known as "uninterrupted sustained silent reading" programs. In a great many cases, these practices proved to be enormously successful in getting students to read more and better than before. With writing, these same strategies can be equally effective. Occasionally, teachers can conduct "write-ins" in their classes. Perhaps once a week, teachers can invite students to spend a short amount of time—perhaps ten or fifteen minutes—writing anything of their choosing: a letter, a poem, a personal diary or journal entry, notes to one another, a sketch, an invented dialogue, a stream-of-consciousness piece, a joke, or the like. Students can contribute to the list of possibilities. Two keys to the success of this writing activity are (1) that the teacher also writes and (2) that sometimes an outsider (principal, counselor, community leader) is invited into the classroom to write with students. Students begin to realize that purposes for writing are myraid and that testing is not the only reason for writing. Students also see that adults actually write; they do not just advocate writing. On a larger scale, perhaps once a week or once every two weeks, four short blasts of the school bell will signify a time for "uninterrupted sustained silent writing." Where it is feasible, everybody in the school at that moment—teachers, administrators, visitors, as well as students—stops what he/she is doing and writes for five or ten minutes.

In Their Own Words: ABE/GED Students Write About the WRITE Reasons

Write to meet one's own needs and interests.

Writing will make me happier and a better person. Things are coming out that have been inside me for years.

*******

I like to help other people. I care about their needs and the needs of my friends and my children. I'm interested in their problems as well as my own. I'm there to help them.

I write to my son who is in the army all the time to show him that we care.

*******

I feel good inside. I'm starting to have a positive way of thinking these days. There was a time in my life when I felt there was no need for me to live. Now I know I have a lot to live for and I feel good about myself. I like myself and I'm going to keep on learning and living my life to the fullest.

*******

**Writing to Evaluate**

Finally, at the end of a week or a grading term, teachers can invite students to evaluate their learning over a period of time. Students can ask themselves such questions as: What have I learned? What has been most interesting to me? What has been most useful or valuable to me? How well have I performed? What must I do differently in order to do better? Where have I fallen short, and why? What interferes with my learning, and how can I control the factors which interfere? What do I need to stimulate me to do my best? This kind of writing permits students to take stock of themselves and of their learning experiences. If teachers elect to read this writing (and students frequently will want them to read it), they can gain insights into students' self-concepts as learners, as well as learning behaviors.

In Their Own Words: ABE/GED Students Write About the WRITE Reasons

Write to evaluate. Write about what has been learned and what has been interesting.

I learned that some of the people are sick and that some of the babies don't survive. There are more old people around today than there are young people.

I learned that there are some people who can't hear or talk to you. Some people can't walk like they used to. I also learned that some people retire when they could still do their jobs.

*******

I like my job because there is something different to do each night. By having a job, I don't have to worry about a place to stay. My job is important because it gives me something to do and makes sure I'll have food to eat.

*******

## Conclusion: Toward Writing-for-Learning in All Disciplines

Admittedly, some overlapping exists among the ten suggestions we have included here, but each has its own distinct focus. Teachers who use these writing-for-learning tasks in their classrooms—and such teachers are rapidly increasing in number—find them helpful as devices for enhancing student achievement across the grade levels and throughout the curriculum. These are, by no means, the only ones available; enterprising teachers will discover and create their own.' Such writing tasks are not intended for formal evaluation in the conventional sense. Although teachers may read them and, perhaps, devise ways to reward students for writing, the tasks we have presented here are for learning rather than for testing.

Bob Tierney, for twenty-eight years a biology teacher at Irvington High School in Fremont, California, has reported success with the following approach to using writing as a way of teaching science: (1) determine what the students already understand by having each of them write down one or two things they know about the subject, and poll the class; (2) ask the students to formulate one or two questions they really want answered; (3) give short reading assignments requiring an expressive writing response; (4) set up a lab that lends itself to student exploration, and do not answer any questions during the lab (require the students to write any questions on the lab paper); (5) after the students have indicated interest, outline a lecture to respond to their interest; (6) during the lecture, pause about every ten minutes to allow students to react in writing; (7) assign homework that requires writing-to-think activities; (8) complete the unit with a short essay test.[5] Here is a teacher who has incorporated a variety of writing-for-learning tasks into a cohesive plan for classroom instruction in biology. Other teachers can do—indeed, are doing—likewise.

It is important to think of writing-for-learning tasks, not as isolated assignments or "fillers" for unused class time, but as a series of forays into connected discourse which provides students access to places inside their own heads. That is to say, as Tierney has demonstrated, that various writing-for-learning tasks can be integrated to inform and re-shape the ways by which teachers prepare and organize students' lessons. Most importantly, writing can become a powerful force in helping students personalize knowledge and become active learners.

### Notes

[1] For a few examples, see the following: C. H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon, "Writing as Learning Through the Curriculum," *College English* (September 1983), pp. 465-474; Joan Creager, "Teaching Writing is Every Teacher's Job," *American Biology Teacher* (May 1980), pp. 668-670; Nancy Martin *et al.*, *Writing and Learning across the Curriculum* (Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden, 1979); the entire issue of *Social Education* (March 1979); Williamn Irmscher, "Writing as a Way of Learning and Developing," *College Composition and Communication* (October 1979), p. 416; William Geesling, "Using Writing about Mathematics as a Teaching Technique," *Mathematics Teacher* (February 1977), p. 113.

[2] See Janet Emig's "Writing as a Mode of Learning," *College Composition and Communication* (May 1977), pp. 123-124. See also Emig's "Hand, Eye, Brain: Some Basics in the Writing Process," in *Research on Composing*, Charles R. Cooper and Lee Odell, eds. (Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1978), pp. 59-71.

[3] "Critical Thinking Is Not Enough," *Educational Leadership* (September 1984), pp. 16-17.

[4] p. 753.

[5] "Writing in Science," *California English* (March-April 1983), p. 9.

# CHAPTER 5

## A Typical WRITE-Now GED Class

### 6:30 P.M.

The instructor arrives, notices that one of the chalkboards cannot be used, and begins to organize handouts and exercises for the two-hour GED class.

### 6:45 P.M.

Two students arrive. While one catches up on last week's math assignment, the other pulls a chair up to the desk where the instructor is sitting and begins to discuss a piece of writing that she wants to do on her own.

"Well, George, here is what I wrote last night. I hope you like it."

"Do you like it, Nancy?"

"Yes, I think it is going to work. My husband hopes I can give it to our pastor next week. Do you think I can have it ready by then?"

"I think you have considered all of the questions that your readers will ask. I get a big kick out of the way you invited people to volunteer for the fete."

"You have to know the people in our congregation. They need gentle persuasion."

"Did you mention where they should put the stuff for the auction?"

"Good point, I forgot to add that part."

"Fix up the lack of parallel structure at the end and you are ready to go with this piece. It should receive favorable attention from your readers. You are polite, and you are not afraid to put some humor into the letter."

"Thanks, I'll show you what it looks like when it is 'published.'"

### 6:50 P.M.

Most of the students are present. The instructor hands out a punctuation exercise. He tells the class to go ahead with the exercise for a few minutes.

7:01 P.M.

The instructor formally greets the class. He has already spoken informally with most of the students.

7:02 - 7:30 P.M.

The instructor goes over the math lesson from the last meeting, putting some problems on the chalkboard that is available. A few students request and get a detailed review of some difficult problems.

7:31 - 7:45 P.M.

The students are invited to continue with the punctuation exercise or to make WRITE-Now Journal entries. The entries can be private, learning-centered, or written for the instructor to comment(dialogue journal). Some work in their own notebooks; some in inexpensive composition books supplied by the instructor.

7:46 - 8:01 P.M.

With students volunteering to explain their answers to the punctuation exercise, the instructor leads a complete review of the assignment.

"Remember, we talked about some of these punctuation problems last week. I picked this exercise for us to go over because I noticed some similar problems in your journal entries."

"Can you give us some more practice on these common errors?"

"Yes, I have an exercise for you to do for unofficial homework."

"I picked up on that last problem with the question mark. You checked it in the margin of my WRITE-Now Journal."

"Good for you. I hope we can make connections like that with our individual writing projects."

8:02 - 8:15 P.M.

The instructor introduces a mini-lecture presentation on a social studies concept - supply and demand(economics). He refers to a few pages in the class text and puts a few terms on the chalkboard. After a short lecture, illustrated by two recent newspaper articles, the instructor asks the class to do some learning-centered writing. The students quietly summarize what they have learned or understood from the lesson. They also write about ideas and terms which were not clear. They write some specific questions about the lesson. This activity takes about five minutes.

8:16 - 8:30 P.M.

The instructor invites the class to ask questions, off the tops of their heads or from their learning-centered writing. He responds to their questions and comments about the social studies mini-lesson presentation.

8:31 - 8:45 P.M.

"Tonight we want to spend a few precious minutes sharing examples of growth in writing - your feelings and illustrations of real progress in the WRITE directions."

"Can we use our WRITE-Now Journals?"

"Certainly. You can also point to or read examples from your writing folders. Some of your projects would be very appropriate illustrations."

The class breaks into sharing groups of three. Because a student is absent, the instructor joins the pair sitting at the back of the room. Because he is familiar with each student's writing preferences and styles, he is able to take the missing student's place without any fuss or muss.

Each student takes a turn at leading the small-group discussions based on actual student writing efforts. There are some moments of laughter and some very quiet moments when the groups reflect on the writing that has been shared. As support groups, designed and organized to get everyone into a WRITE-Now mood, the students work well. Only one student seems to be uneasy about the activity, and that uneasiness, the instructor suspects, has been prompted by the subject of his classmate's short piece on divorce. The uneasiness will pass. Another topic will help to get the student into a more caring, open mood.

The sharing activity concludes with a reading - a form of publication - to the group by one of the students. The instructor has already cleared the way for the oral presentation of the student's short piece on raising children. After a brief silence for peer inquiry and support, the student asks for and gets some constructive criticism from her classmates. She will probably submit her piece to a local parenting organization for possible publication in a newsletter.

8:46 - 9:00 P.M.

The instructor introduces the math assignment, puts some sample problems on the chalkboard, and then goes over the steps involved in solving a few of the problems.

"You are welcome to write through the steps in your journals. That works well for some people, but it's up to you."

9:01 - 9:03 P.M.

"If anyone wishes to have me respond to a dialogue journal entry, please put your notebook or journal on the desk. Don't forget to look for that article in the Sunday paper. I'll see you on Thursday."

9:04 - 9:10 P.M.

One student remains to talk privately with the instructor. He is the one who was upset by the piece on divorce.

"I hope you weren't worried by my silence during the sharing time."

"I was a little concerned. How do you feel about what your group discussed?"

"I guess it hit too close to home tonight. But that's not really anyone's fault. I'll have to learn to deal with these things."

"Maybe you will write about it?"

"No problem. That might be a good idea. I'll let you know."

9:45 - 10:00 P.M.

The instructor is now at home, relaxing in his basement "office." With classical music via the local public FM radio station adding to the WRITE-Now mood, he spends a few minutes with the six WRITE-Now Journals that his students gave him at the end of class.

He usually does this reading as soon as possible after each class because dialogue journal and learning log entries often give him valuable information to use in planning for the next class. Tonight he reads that two students want to go over a previous math lesson. A third student wrote that he hopes to get a promotion when he passes the GED tests. Two other students want the instructor's feedback on their personal writing projects.

Our WRITE-Now instructor makes a few dialogue journal entries and writes a note to himself about looking for a pamphlet that might be of interest to one of his students. After selecting a reading exercise for next time, he puts the journals into his briefcase, turns off the desk light, and goes back upstairs to watch a game with his son.

Special WRITE-Now Tip

Try to plan a balanced session of reading, math, and writing/writing skills activities. The typical GED class described above occurred during the middle of the semester. The journal-writing and sharing-group procedures had already been established. The students knew what to do and, even more important for the WRITE reasons, they knew why they were doing these exercises and projects at home and in class. They didn't see the WRITE-Now activities as anything special; they considered them to be natural and expected ingredients in a GED class recipe for success.

# HELPING OUR ABE/GED STUDENTS TO REALIZE THE POWER OF COMPOSING

. . . I recommend that teachers devote more classroom time to observing students write and to acquainting students with the idea that each of them has a composing process. Once students glimpse what it is they do as they write, they often become willing - and even eager - to refine, change, or enrich their writing habits. At that point, teachers can work quite effectively on a whole range of composing skills, and they can introduce editing as one important skill among many.

. . . They may call upon editing rules and teachers' comments as a way to help them say what they mean more clearly. But when they recognize that what they want to communicate is something only they can construct, they will realize the power of composing.

From: Sondra Perl's article,
"Unskilled Writers as Composers," in
New York University Education Quarterly,
1979.

# CHAPTER 6: THE WRITING PROCESS

## Two Valuable Resource Texts

The discussion which follows describes the writing process and offers adult educators some suggestions for process-conference teaching. Alan Ziegler's The Writing Workshop - Vol.1 and Donald Murray's Learning by Teaching are the basic sources for this relatively short introduction to the WRITE approach Both books are included in the bibliography.

## The Writing Process

An essential step in creating an atmosphere conducive to writing is to discuss with the students how complicated and difficult writing can be. Tell them that even the best writers make mistakes, lose their way, cross out, and are constantly reminded how hard it is to write well. Tell them that good writers tend to mark up their papers more than others. Our students probably don't realize how difficult it can be for a good writer to put down a series of flowing, effective sentences or lines of poetry. So, when these students can't write easily and/or quickly, they get discouraged because they assume it is because that can't do it at all. They shouldn't feel like they are inadequate because a stream of beautiful phrases doesn't "flow like water at the turn of a tap."

Any discussion of the difficulty of writing should be prefaced by saying that students should feel comforted at how well thay do considering the complexity of the task. Rather than feeling intimidated by their writing problems, an understanding of the writing process can help them do even better.

After many years of emphasizing product rather than process, in the last ten years education researchers have turned their attention to identifying components of the writing process. Although there are no formulas, there are patterns, and several models have been presented of the phases that occur during the course of writing(see guide for process models). The writing process differs from author to author, and each author may vary the process from piece to piece.

Because the phases often overlap, the writer is constantly selecting and rejecting words and thinking associatively throughout the writing process.

## Phases of the Writing Process

### Prewriting

Prewriting is pre-writing. It includes everything that we do to get started. Thinking can be prewriting. Doodling can be prewriting. Making lists can be prewriting. Asking questions can be prewriting. It is what we do before(pre-) we begin writing. It includes getting into the mood and thinking about and sorting through potential material. This phase may occur anytime. An idea is forming. The writer may not know what, but he can sense that something alive and clear will emerge.

Prewriting can involve more than this. Sometimes a faint glimpse of an idea will work itself into a clearer picture, the subject eventually enlarging itself until the composition's shape and scope are almost complete in the writer's mind. A poet once commented, "I wrote a poem on the subway today. Now I just have to put it on paper."

Prewriting can consist of coming up with an opening phrase or a tentative plan of attack - anything to help eliminate the often threatening blankness of the empty white page. Some writers ease slowly into writing, while others skip prewriting and jump right in to drafting their thoughts. Many of our students do not realize that they may need an incubation period before they begin writing. They should not feel pressured to get started right away. We should help them understand this, and we should avoid admonishing or helping students who have not begun to write. In fact, they may actually be engaged in prewriting.

### Exploratory Writing

This phase is sometimes partly incorporated into the prewriting phase. During the exploratory draft, writers find it helpful to concentrate on what they are saying without consciously diverting energy into grammar, punctuation, sentence structure or overall form. They should try to suppress such self-critical thought as, "This idea isn't worth much" or "This image doesn't seem appropriate." The mind should be fluid at this stage and every form of resistance to a complete release should be rejected. Although it may be easy for us to walk and chew gum at the same time, it is extremely difficult for our minds to think creatively and critically at once.

Many writers find that "freewriting"(automatic writing or brainstorming) is a good technique for exploratory writing. Freewriting consists of writing non-stop without pausing or looking back, usually for a set time period. If writers get stuck, they can write, "I don't know what to write" or "I'm stuck" or they can write about their physical environment("My arm hurts" or "I hear a bird singing outside"). The idea behind freewriting is to keep the creative juices flowing.

Freewriting is a device to help writers get down those often elusive first words, one of the biggest problems writers face. Anything that gets them going we should try. Alan Ziegler cautions us not to hold our students accountable for their exploratory drafts. Our main concern should be that they write.

### Developmental Writing

During this phase, which may span several drafts, the material is shaped. Writers become more conscious of language and structure as they develop and connect ideas. They remain open to expansion and change, but they narrow in on the finished product.

Developmental writing includes the first stage of a two-tiered revision process, which writer/teacher Donald Murray calls "internal" and "external" revision. As Murray sees it, internal revision includes "everything writers do to discover and develop what they have to say, beginning with the reading of a completed first draft."

Writers decide what they want to say, and they make changes to insure that they are saying it in the best way possible to meet the demands of a particular piece. At the end of this stage a writer can read a piece in search of the differences between what he or she hoped was written and what he or she has actually written.

Then the writer tries to eliminate those differences. External revision occurs when the writer has produced either what he or she set out to accomplish or something that took shape along the way. In the final stage of revision, writers make their work presentable to their readers. They pay special attention to grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. This is the time when writers reach for their dictionaries and usage books. They pay attention to the conventions of form and language, mechanics, and style.

## Last Look(s)

After completing a piece of writing, a writer often lets it sit for a while - an hour, a day, or longer - before taking a last look. A mistake or another way of saying something may become apparent.

No one model of the writing process can describe how everyone writes. The model I've given through Murray and Ziegler is a point of reference. In actuality, the writing process may not proceed in a linear way from start to finish. Writers often move forward and backward among the various stages as they work on a text.Ziegler says that students should be cautious about constantly jumping forward to external revision. Not only can this break the flow of writing, but students might spend ten minutes working on one sentence, only to delete the sentence later on."Writing is a constant process of discovery and unfolding as a piece develops."

## Getting Started in the WRITE Directions

In the early conferences or class meetings, we can go to the students and ask them questions about their subjects. If they don't have subjects, we can ask questions about their lives. What do they know that we don't know? What are they authorities on? What would they like to know? What would they like to explore? We need to be friendly and interested in them as individuals, as people who may have something to say.

As their drafts begin to develop and as they find the need for focus, we should be a bit removed. We should try to be a fellow writer who shares his own writing problems, his own search for meaning and form.

Finally, as the meaning begins to be found, we should try to lean back and be more of a reader. We should be more interested in the language and in clarity. We should begin detaching ourselves from the writer and from the piece of writing which is telling the student how to write it. We should become fascinated by this detachment which is forced on student and teacher as a piece of writing discovers its own purpose(Murray).

Early in the Process - Don't ask a student what she thinks of her paper. Instead, ask questions such as the following:

What's your purpose in this paper?

What are you trying to do in this paper?

Have you read it to a friend?

What did you learn from this piece of writing?

What parts of the paper do you like the most?

What surprised you in the draft?

What parts of the paper did you have trouble with?

Later on:

Where is the piece of writing taking you?

What's the most important thing you're saying in this paper?

What happened after this? How did you feel?

What questions do you have of me?

What do you intend to do in the next draft?

What can you do to make this beginning better?

Can you think of a different way to say this?

The words on the page don't tell me that. How could you write it to let the reader know?

Students have a right to expect the teacher's opinion of the work, and the teacher has a professional obligation to give it, but don't tell the students exactly what to do. Don't do it all for them. They must think for themselves.

Listen to the students. How are they responding to your suggestions and questions? The conference should be a genuine conversation. Where are the ideas coming from? If they're all coming from the teacher, then the students aren't really participating, just appearing to be. Lead students to talk about their special interests in more detail. As discussion narrows, they will often find topics and purposes. Conference teaching is an indirect method designed to help students find their own way.

If we want to encourage our students to write for life, we have to help them become actively involved in the criticism of their works. We have to offer support and learn how to ask the right questions.

Denny Wolfe and Robert Reising in Writing for Learning in the Content Areas (1983), offer a detailed explanation of a process for using writing to teach material in any content area. The phases of the process include prevision, reflection, selection, zero drafts, first drafts, peer inquiry, initial revision, teacher inquiry, further revision, and evaluation or publication. The extended example which follows was used successfully in a typical evening GED class. It illustrates a process approach to writing in mathematics.*

Prevision - I asked my students to think about why the ability to add, subtract, multiply, and divide is important in modern society. After one minute I gave students an opportunity to respond and placed their ideas on the chalkboard. I then asked them to rank the list in terms of personal importance.

Reflection - I asked the GED students to look at the top three reasons on their lists and choose one which they could explain most fully. I urged them to consider which one they could argue most persuasively about as an important reason for learning basic mathematics skills. They were given a few minutes to think about their ideas.

Selection - We talked about possible roles they could take with this writing activity. They could select roles other than their actual identities, but most decided to write as themselves. They were directed to write a personal note (mode) of exactly 100 words to a fifth-grader - ten years old - (audience) explaining why their selected reasons were indeed important ones for mastering basic mathematics (topic, purpose). Each student was asked to write from the "I" point of view. Their notes were to appeal to the interest and comprehension abilities of a ten-year-old (flavor). They were asked to sign their finished notes.

Zero Draft - I asked the class to make lists of reasons a ten-year-old might have for feeling that learning basic mathematics is not important. Each student was to write down three possible reasons a ten-year-old might express and then jot down words or phrases they might use in trying to counter the child's reasons. This phase of the writing process is often described as the prewriting phase, a time during which writers do all of the things they do before they actually work at producing a first draft.

First Draft - This is an attempt to write effectively according to the elements in the Selection phase. The students had to explain why the reason(s) they selected were important for learning basic mathematics (topic, purpose). They had to remain in their chosen roles. The flavor had to appeal to a ten-year-old's interests (audience), and the personal note had to be as close as possible to 100 words. This was their writing assignment.

Peer Review - I divided the class into pairs at the start of the next class meeting. They were given the directions which appear below.

1. Count the number of words in your partner's note (first draft). Mark the 100-word point.
2. Count the number of sentences.
3. Divide the number of sentences into 100 to get the average number of words per sentence.
4. Count the number of words of more than two syllables.
5. Add the total number of words with more than two syllables to the average number of words per sentence.
6. Multiply the total by .4 to determine how simple or complex the writing is (the lower the product, the simpler the writing).
7. Read your partner's note to determine whether he or she has skillfully handled such matters as topic, purpose, and audience.

8. Try to give your partner one or more suggestions for improving the writing.

Revision - Each student was asked to check all eight items described above and to reconsider all previous phases, making decisions for possible improvements in the note.

Teacher Review - I collected the notes, read them, and checked their products (no. 6 above). I then made suggestions for revisions.

Revising - Students were invited to produce revisions based on their own feelings and their reactions to my suggestions and their classmates' comments. Editing also took place in most cases.

Evaluation or Publication - We talked about what they had learned from the entire activity. Sentence complexity was the most pressing concern in the revision phase of the process. Most of the students had composed notes which were probably too complex for their assigned audience. Several students did publish their notes by sharing them with children. I also completed the assignment and asked my daughter to read it. She asked me to type it because my handwriting was sloppy! I did.

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*Adapted from Wolfe and Reising (pp. 73-74).

## Why Anne Should Master Basic Math Skills

Dear Anne,

Because I am a teacher of adults who have not been able to complete their high shoool studies, I am concerned about your school work, especially your math studies. I think it is important for you to learn how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide whole numbers, fractions, and decimals because your ability to solve personal and practical math problesm will enable you to keep your individual and family finances organized and balanced both before and after your complete your formal schooling. You and I have talked about your interests and your talents as they might lead to career opportunities. Even though you haven't expressed a desire to study or work in a math-related area, you will always need a command of the basics in order to manage your personal financial affairs and keep accurate records of your employment statistics. Checkbooks, pay stubs, and budget planning forms will be just a few of the normal, regular math challenges you will have to meet as an adult. By the time you are in your twenties, the math skills required of the average person in order to survive will be at least equal to what you will be attempting to master in the 10th grade. Just look at the federal income tax forms that I had to complete last year! Pay attention in math class, Anne; you will have to solve math problems in life that are considerably harder than the adding and subtracting you do now with your allowance and good-behavior summer pay.

Love,

Dad

Question

How realistic is it to go through all of the steps that Wolfe and Reising have described and illustrated in Writing for Learning in the Content Areas? Will we, as ABE/GED teachers in traditional programs, have the time and the energy to prepare for and conduct such extensive writing activities?

Our Response

I usually take my GED classes through one or two exercises as extensive as the math/writing activity described above. I feel that it gives the students a chance to get into the concept of writing as a process. They often comment on the ways that they have used writing for personal growth and development, and they frequently share some of their frustrations with on-the-job and in-the-community writing tasks.

Looking to and beyond 1988, I plan to connect our experiences with similar across-the-curriculum writing activities with the whole (holistic) business of getting from an assigned essay topic to at least a reasonably good short essay draft. One of my strategies will be to work through successive approximations of writing exercises that will give my students some practical writing experience. They should feel more confident about the challenges of the new GED Writing Skills Test because they have already produced some pieces that could be used for publication in or outside their GED class.

### A WRITE-for-LIFE Illustration

By way of previsión, getting the class into the process exercise, I read a local newspaper article about a very recent and controversial matter. I suggested that there would probably be quite a response from the public. I told my GED students to look for follow-up articles and letters to the editor.

As a reflection activity, we discussed possible solutions to the problem. I asked them to think about how they felt and what they thought could be done to solve the problem. Using the chalkboard, I demonstrated how I might write through some of my feelings and ideas on the topic. I asked them to take a few minutes of class time to do the same kind of reflecting.

The selection phase of this process exercise was easy. Since most of the students did read the local papers, they were familiar with letters to the editor. After discussing some of their reactions to this kind of public writing or publication opportunity, I suggested that we each think about the process of composing a letter to the editor. We talked about fact versus opinion, length, the importance of supporting detail, and possible methods of organization. We had all of the ingredients for cooking up some interesting letters to the editor. We had a topic, a purpose, an audience, and several options on tone and flavor.

Before going on to the evening's other GED preparation activities, we took a few minutes to do some zero drafting. Some of us clustered, some made lists of possible directions and specifics, and some of us did a little freewriting in order to keep the hand, mind, and eye working together. The room was almost as quiet as it is during GED practice tests. A few students were talking about the topic, trying to see how and what others were thinking. Such conversations are definitely appropriate zero draft activities. Be prepared for all kinds of getting-into-the-WRITE-Mood expressions and behaviors!

The first draft was due at the next class meeting. I wanted to encourage the possibility of some actual publication experiences. The decision to send a letter to the editor would be up to each of us.

Rather than collect the first drafts and evaluate or grade them, I shared my draft by reading it aloud. I asked for their reactions and waited. Finally, after repeating my sincere request for their responses to my letter to the editor, a few students did offer some words of encouragement. Yes, I had written along the lines of persuasion that one had followed, and yes, I had used the same fact that another had included in his draft. Now they were thinking about their first drafts.

The peer review phase gave us an opportunity to read three or four of the letter drafts that our fellow citizens/classmates had written. We did this silently as we sat in small circles. We pointed out good arguments, and we also respected our fellow letter writers enough to suggest opportunities for clearer explanations and stronger support of opinions regarding the way(s) to solve the problem facing the community. We wanted all of our letters to make sense and to have publication quality.

Revision time was an individual choice. If anyone wanted to keep moving toward publication beyond the class, he or she was welcome to revise the letter and submit it directly to the local newspaper or ask me for teacher review. A few students submitted their revised letters for my editorial reactions.

As I evaluated the activity, I knew that, publication or not, I wanted to do something like this again with my next GED class. The drafts that I read were actually longer than the 200-word GED essay writing assignment. When I discussed this writing activity at the next class meeting, the majority of the class said they thought it was a valuable and relevant exercise for a GED class. After all, didn't they have to look for all kinds of punctuation and grammar errors in the present (pre-1988) GED Writing Skills Test? And didn't they have to use inference and interpretation skills in coping with the GED Reading and Social Studies tests? Smart class!

One student did send her letter to the editor, but it wasn't published. She told us that she was not discouraged. She was glad she had taken a WRITE step. "My husband is proud of me, and my kids saw me writing for a real audience and a real purpose."

Yes, my fellow ABE/GED practitioners, I believe that such extensive writing process exercises are without doubt worth the time and energy it takes to prepare for and facilitate their completion. You are the instructor. If you can connect the GED content areas to the everyday concerns and interests of your ABE/GED students, you can be a good teacher of writing. You don't have to have a degree or two in English to help your students become more confident and competent writers. And (and I know how I have begun this sentence) my experience has convinced me that you can see such improvements in student attitudes and writing skills in one or two semesters.

## The WRITE-Now Team Comments on Revision

We can't help our students to revise - to understand what revision is all about - until they have produced enough writing for us to read and discuss with them. When we respond to what a student has written, to what has been drafted, we need to consider whether or not the piece has a future. Not everything a student writes needs to have a future. If a piece isn't going anywhere, it doesn't need to be revised.

### WRITE-Now Teacher to Student:

"I can see that you are working on a draft. When you have written enough to know what you are trying to say, to have a good feeling about where the piece is headed, let me know. Because I might not be in the room when you are ready for a conference, come and get me or tell a staff member that you'd like to talk with me about your writing project."

### Later:

"Have you composed most of your thoughts on the topic?"

"Do you have a purpose for the piece?"

"Why did you write it?"

"Do you know much about your audience - your reader(s)?"

### Is the writing going anywhere?

Sometimes ABE/GED teachers of writing will encounter first drafts which might never be revised because the writers can't find or don't want to find a center or an energy for what they have drafted. If that happens, it is usually best to let the piece go into the writing folder "as is." Maybe, after moving on to other things, the writer will come back to the first draft with a fresh eye - with a re-vision for the piece. Now seeing some possibilitie for the piece beyond the initial composing struggles, the writer may begin to rewrite with enthusiasm and vigor. Now it is likely that the writer sees a purpose for the piece, a reason for re-drafting and possibly crafting the piece. When these moments occur in an ABE/GED classroom, we need to be fellow writers and collaborators with our student writers. We need to re-see the piece with them.

* * * * * * * * *

What can we do to encourage our ABE/GED students to revise their writing?

1) Ask students to write on every other line when using lined paper. The space will permit more careful reading and provide room for revisions and corrections.
2) Let students know that it is often a good idea to allow some time to elapse before they rewrite. By getting some distance between a first draft and its possible re-working, the writer might find that it is easier to see what changes need to be made.
3) Encourage them to read, as much as possible, their own work and the writing of others. The more experience they have as active readers, the more likely they'll be able to rewrite effectively.
4) Be there to care and share. When our students see that people are interested in their thoughts and that they have something to say, they'll have a better understanding of the writing process.
5) They'll be more likely to revise if they see that some kinds of publishing opportunities are really there for their revised pieces.
6) We can encourage our students to re-work their pieces by asking questions which call for more information and clarification.

When we ask questions, we help the writer to focus on the specific points that we are raising.

7) Where and when it is possible to do so, ask the writers to read aloud the re-phrasings and other revision opportunities. Without any comment from their teachers , they'll often say what they thought they wrote and know what has to be changed, added, or deleted.

8) If we can offer our students some ways of connecting what they have written with our needs and interests or with other readers' needs and interests, we might give them just the motivation they need to stay with a piece.

9) Provide "published" examples of adult writing for your students to read. The booklet, "The Writing Wheel," from a 1987-87 PA 310 project, and the anthology, "Our Words, Our Voices, Our Worlds," from our 1984-85 310 project offer several kinds of publishing opportunities for students to consider. By relating the similarities between your students' pieces and these "published" pieces, you will be helping your students to see that their writing does have value and promise.

10) Set a good example by showing your students how you worked through the process of producing some kind of "published" writing such as a church bulletin insert or a newspaper article. Stress your revision activities. "Writing is a way to clarify, strengthen, and energize the self, to render individuality rich, full, and social," says Richard Lanham.

* * * * * * * * *

"Only by taking the position of the reader toward one's own prose, putting a reader's pressure on it, can the self be made to grow. Writing should enhance and expand the self, allow it to try out new possibilities, tentative selves.

The moral ingredient in writing, then, works first not on the morality of the message but on the nature of the sender, on the complexity of the self. "Why bother?" To invigorate and enrich your selfhood, to increase, in the most literal sense, your self-consciousness. Writing, properly pursued, does not make you better. It makes you more alive."

From: Revising Prose by Richard A. Lanham
(New York: Charles Scribner's Sons,
1979, pp. 105-06)

A CHECKLIST FOR REVISING: Answer with a "yes," "no," or "?"

Introduction:

___Is the central idea or point of view of your essay clearly stated?

___Do your first several sentences appeal to the reader, inviting him or her to continue reading?

Body of Essay:

___Did you attend to matters of organization? Are the parts/paragraphs of your essay clearly identified or arranged in effective, logical order?

___Did you develop your paragraphs with facts, figures, examples, and specifics to support your general statements?

___Did you use clear, direct language? Did you avoid wordiness?

___Did you use appropriate transitional words or phrases?

Conclusion:

___Is your ending forceful?

___Did you refocus on your main point?

Editing:

___Did you check for spelling and grammar errors? Did you, for example, avoid fragments and unnecessary punctuation?

___Is your essay legible?

___Do you have adequate margins?

Extra Positives:

___Is there any humor or wit in your paper? Why not?

___Did you use any emotional appeals? The readers are human beings, you know.

___Will your readers know that you put some hard thinking into your composition?

___Were you sincere? Did you try to be logical?

## A WRITE-NOW TIP on Using Revising Checklists

The checklist for revising that we offered above was our modification of one of the excellent evaluation guides in Writing for Learning in the Content Areas(1983) by Denny Wolfe and Robert Reising. If you purchase this write-on-target resource, you are permitted to reproduce the checklists and writing evaluation guides for your classroom use.

Whether you use one of the checklists or evaluation guides in a published source or make up your own revision checklist, you will still need to make the criteria come alive for your students. You will have to talk through an essay draft or two so that such matters as paragraph structure and transitions are fully illustrated. Your students need to see how, for example, a good introduction serves to advance the writer's central idea and invite the reader to continue reading the essay. Then, and this is the tough part, you need to help your students take a critical look at their own essay drafts. They need to become their own best editors and proofreaders. When your students start to tell you how they plan to improve their essays' organizational facets, you'll know you have helped to make some solid connections between evaluative criteria and student revision efforts.

Let's review the criteria of the GED Essay Scoring Guide.

Papers Scored 6, 5, or 4 = Upper-half papers. They make clear a definite purpose for the essay. They also have a structure that shows some evidence of deliberate planning. The control of English usage ranges from fairly reliable at four to confident and accomplished at six.

Papers scored 3, 2, 1, or 0 = Lower-half papers. They either fail to convey a purpose sufficiently or lack one entirely. Their structure ranges from rudimentary at three, to random at two, to absent at one. The control of the conventions of English usage tends to follow this same gradient.

Do more than tell your students; show them evaluative criteria.

PROCESS PARTNERSHIPS: What We Learned from 310 No. 98-5013(1984-85)

When the project title was composed("Publishing an Anthology of Adult Student Writing: A Partnership for Literacy"), the project coordinator emphasized the co-sponsorship efforts of members of PCTE and PAACE. As he continued to plan for the creative writing component, he began to see the necessity of another partnership for literacy, the very crucial relationship between adult student and adult education instructor. The WRITE approach to their partnership can yield the best results when:

1. The adult education supervisor supports teacher efforts to nurture the growth of adult student writers.
2. The adult education instructor is very enthusiastic about writing for learning and personal development.
3. The adult education instructor plans for and guides students through a variety of writing activities - most of them non-threatening.
4. The adult education instructor writes during class writing activities and is willing to share his writing and writing problems with students.
5. The adult education instructor has patience.
6. The adult education instructor is a good listener.
7. The adult education instructor encourages inspired writing even if it doesn't fit the assignment or the form stipulated.
8. The adult education instructor allows students to write on just about anything, but encourages them to write autobiographical material and to supplement it freely with imagined details.
9. The adult education instructor has students write toward the eventual goal of publication or performance for a local audience.
10. The adult education instructor is a careful reader of students' works, but he/she senses how critical to be with students so as not to discourage them.
11. The adult education instructor conveys to his/her students a sense of high expectations.

# CHAPTER 7 - TWO EXTENSIVE PROCESS-CONFERENCE ILLUSTRATIONS

As we have done and will do again several times in this manual, we have included samples of writing by our ABE/GED/ESL students. In this chapter, which concentrates on some of our WRITE-Now approaches to teaching writing in ABE situations, we begin with a short case study. Louise was selected because all three of us have worked with her in I.U. 12's Project A.B.E., an indivdualized employment-oriented Adult Basic Education program in York, PA.

We knew Louise could read, but it was hard to measure her reading skills with published, traditional reading tests. We relied on having her read aloud to us from both fiction and non-fiction materials in our basic literacy/ ABE I library. Earlier we had discovered that it was very difficult for Louise to read silently and get much out of the experience. When she read aloud to one of us and we discussed her reactions and understandings of what she had just read, she seemed to get a lot more out of the material.

Knowing that she could comprehend and talk about what she read aloud, we decided to see what and how she would write about her reading experiences. We asked her to write in her lined composition book. We demonstrated how she might wish to comment on or summarize her reading by writing some comments and summaries in her notebook. In other words, we were using language experience techniques to encourage Louise to face a blank page.

For several days we read what she had diligently copied from her reading materials. Patiently and carefully we tried to get Louise to stop copying and start composing. One idea we liked from our work with the National Writing Project linkage effort of a few years ago was the planning/idea sheet that we sometimes used with adult beginning writers.

From: Louise's Writing Folder

Some Things I Like (To Do)

1. Work
2. Read
3. Learn things
4. Clean house

Some Things I Know About

1. Going to church
2. Reading the Bible
3. Cooking

Some Things That Are Important to Me

1. Keeping a clean house
2. Being nice to people

Some Things I Want To Learn

1. Typing
2. All about computers

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We asked Louise to write about some of the things that are important to her. Notice that she connected with her lists and more!

* * * * * *

i Like to go Shopping i Like to Read i Lik to keep everything clean around my House i Like to Learn about being a nursin Helpin (nurse's helper) imporrant to me to try to do things right i Like workin Becase it a Lot i Like to Lern thy Did not Have went i were yong to School in Day Back

When she shared this "breakthrough" writing with us, she clarified her main idea - what she had meant to say. "They didn't have things like computers and television when I was in school. I want to learn about tape recorders and all those things."

This writing effort was a breakthrough for Louise in terms of her studies at Project A.B.E. We felt she was ready for some work in English language arts workbooks. We wanted to keep her writing and reading. The exercise that confirmed our "guesstimate" of Louise's readiness to work for longer periods on her own was in Personal Stories-Book I (Linmore Pub.). After answering "yes" or "no" to a series of short statements, Louise then wrote her first personal story.

* * * * * * * *

i am Louise __________ i am not married i Live in the city my famly live in the city i Like to go church on Sundays i Like to Work i Like to Read and Larn things i am 83 years old i Like People i Like to Do things to Help i can i Like to Be frinds with People i Loove children if someone need Help and i can Help i Loove that to

* * * * * * * *

If you haven't had much experience with reading the writing of adult beginning readers and writers, now is the WRITE time. We were delighted with this piece. She "published" it when she read it to one of us. She had written and read her thoughts on a single topic (Who Am I?). We have said it often to anyone who will listen: don't worry about spelling and punctuation at this critical point in the adult's learning experience. Even if the student is an octogenarian, there will be time for attending to surface features later. Our priorities must be on ideas and fluency when we start WRITE-Now.

We also asked Louise to participate in our dialogue journal project. She wrote entries about her thoughts and her studies, and we responded with a few sentences of our own. Here is one such exchange.

* * * * * * * *

6/3/87 Louise

i Have a friend Her name is ________ She is very nice to Be around we have fun to gether we are not perfect and we dont no any body that is perfect no one is perfect in this world God gave me a chance to make Something of my Life So i tring to get my GED i Hope to progress if you don't try to Help yourself no one will do it for you

6/3/87 One of Us

Friends are very important. We all need them. Loise, please read handout no.7 in the general reading folder. Tell me, in writing, about John Breck, John Deere, Clarence Birdseye, and Thomas Edison. What happened because they were curious?

6/4/87 Louise

People who are good at making money are constantly lerning theyve developed the habit of expressing curiosity about things they see and hear in their local communities they do one thing very well - ask questions about things they see and here in i think every thing you do the more you work at it it get better

* * * * * * * *

By making just a few cosmetic changes in the transcription of Louise's comments from her handwriting to a typed version, it is very plain to see that her writing is getting better. Just as any writer would do, she referred to the text of her reading to spell better and she used a few phrases from the original text. The dialogue journal/learning log experience had helped Louise to be a more enthusiastic reader and writer.

Here are two topics that also worked well with Louise and others among our older learners:

1) Write about some of the things that were not available to you or that did not exist when you were in school. Tell us why you would like to learn more about some of these things.
2) Tell us more about yourself. You might want to write about how you go through a typical day in your life.

This kind of writing is likely to work with beginning writers because it allows them to compose from lists and sequences.

A final WRITE-Now illustration from Louise's folder resulted from a learning-centered writing activity. She was reading short selections designed to help students become better at identifying main ideas. One of the passages discussed the making of pottery. Louise wrote, "When the indians made the pottery they use something (heat) to make the clay hard so that it could hold water or anything else you want to use the pottery for it is like any other thing you do You keep at it till you get it right."

Louise is still at it. She is on the right path.

## An Extensive Illustration of How One Piece Was Written by an ABE/Basic Literacy Student

Having spoken about the teaching of writing to several groups of adult educators, both paid and volunteer, during the past few years, I have begun to see that extensive illustrations do have significant value for staff development purposes. Where they don't have apparent value is in the bulk of the published texts and workbooks we have examined in the course of the project year. Very early in the year it became overwhelmingly clear to the WRITE-Now team that ABE/GED teachers and tutors need to have access to both kinds of texts - texts that offer exercises and activities, and texts that illustrate and discuss these kinds of writing/thinking materials with plenty of student-teacher interactions.

When the student whom we have selected for our ABE I process-conference illustration first came to us, she was very shy and very reluctant to do any writing beyond workbook-type filling in and filling up. She confessed that her reluctance was grounded in her lack of confidence in her spelling skills. Because we were "teachers," she didn't want us to see her poor spelling.

As WRITE-Now teachers and experienced adult educators, we quickly assured her that her spelling problems were not going to come between us and one of her most critical educational goals - her desire to be a better writer and reader. That barrier cleared, we were ready to move WRITE along.

Conference 1

George: Thanks for writing about the effect of the automobile on modern life. In a few weeks we'll look at how other adult education students wrote on the topic.

Student: It was hard for me to write about that topic. I don't have a car. I don't drive anymore.

George: I could tell that you were having a tough time with the topic. It's hard to pick a topic that everyone can write about with confidence and enthusiasm.

Student: Don't look at my spelling. I want to be a better speller. I need to improve my vocabulary, too.

George: Let's go over some of the words that gave you trouble with this piece. You can keep a list in your notebook. Are you glad we aren't going to do any additional work on this topic?

Student: I sure am! That was hard!

George: Dot told me you might enjoy writing about one of the jobs you used to have. What do you think?

Student: I worked in a hospital. I liked that job. Yes, that's something I can write about.

George: Well, I'll talk with you about it next week. Think about it. If you want to write in your notebook about possible topics and ideas, I will be happy to discuss it with you.

Conference 2

Student: What do you want me to do today?

George: Whatever you would like to do. I see you have your math book open. Do you want to work on math for a while, or do you want to do some writing?

I like Working in Hospital because every one there are niceer than any other Place I Work. every one like me And I like them. I Clean in the childern department. I wast the beds and clean around the room.

See Conference 2.

---

I like it. I dont Know if it was the Childern I like see much are my job. Well it wasing hard to do the wark. it was nice. the Childern wald Came in the room where I was and talk to me. and they want me to play with them. but I had to do my work frish. then when I got my wark where I can play. I would sing and in a little while all the Children was singing too. I can get along with the childern better than the Darter are the R.N.

See Conference 3.

---

Well I diding give them neels. I wark at the _______________ Haspital far abaute 12 year I start in the launary then in to(HouseKeepting department) On the Childern department

See Conference 4.

---

Well I like the King of work because no one was over you all the time. you work like you want to. as long as the work was done by 4:0 Clock 7:0 Clock untill 4:0 Clase was the time to work. I gress I like it because it was like my home no one Hurrying me.

See Conference 5.

Student: I think I'll do some writing. I want to write about my jobs in the ______ hospital.

George: Fine. You can write in your notebook. I'll check on you in a few minutes.

Student: Well, I didn't get much done. Here is what I have so far.

George: (After reading beginning of student's draft) I can tell you have a strong interest in this topic. Why did you like the work? I think it is great that you liked the people in the hospital and they liked you.

Student: I'm not finished.

George: While you're writing, I'll write an entry in my Write-for-Life Journal. You have inspired me this morning.

Conference 3

George: It looks as though you have found your energy for this piece.

Student: You can read it. (George reads developing draft)

George: What part do you like the best?

Student: I liked to play with the children. We used to sing stuff like"Old Macdonald Had a Farm." (Student sings part of first verse) They liked to sing!

George: Please read this sentence(points)to me.

Student: I can get along with the children better than the doctor and the R.N.'s. (Explaining to George) R.N.'s are nurses.

George: I believe that you liked working in the children's department. Did you say that here?

Student: Not yet.

George: Why did you get along with the children better than the medical staff?

Student: I have an idea about that. Give me some more time to write.

George: Now is the WRITE time!

Conference 4

George: Please read your draft to me. I'll listen carefully and then ask you some questions to think and/or write about for next time.

George: I really liked the part about not having to be the bad guy.

Student: You mean because I didn't give them needles?

George: Yes. Can you tell me more about the work you did in the hospital?

Student: Sure. (Student gets into writing. George goes away to help other students)

Conference 5

Student: I went on to a second page.

George: (After reading) You also liked the work because you were not supervised very closely. Well, you wanted to leave at 11:00 A.M., and it is now a few minutes after. Did you enjoy writing about this topic?

Student: I really enjoyed doing this! I know you'll want me to do some math next time.

George: You are making a lot of progress in math and writing. I enjoyed what you have written. Remember, I'm not the one who is hurrying you!

Student: See you next time. I guess that will be next week.

George: Think about where this piece is taking you.

Student: I will. Good-bye.

Conference 6

George: We haven't had a chance to talk about your writing for some time. You've been away from the area and have only recently returned. Do you remember what you were writing about before you left?

Student: Yes, I was writing about my job in the hospital.

George: Would you like to take some time to review what you have already written?

Student: Yes, it will help me to remember what I said last.

George: (after student has studied the contents of her writing folder) Now that you have gone over what you have written, would you

Conference 6(cont.)

please write a short piece that will tell us where you want to go from here?

Student: I'll try.

Conference 7

(George silently reads draft)

Student's Draft

I would still like to work in the hospital. I like it better than any other kind of work I have done since I worked there.

I would like to be a nurse's aide in a hospital or a nursing home somewhere. When I worked in a hospital, I was in Camden, N.J. I don't know what it is like here in the hospital. I went for a job here, but they never called me. Yes, I would like to work in there now.

George: You mentioned in your first draft that when you worked in a hospital, you cleaned the rooms. Why have you decided to become a nurse's aide?

Student: When I worked in the hospital before, I only saw the children by chance once in a while. I would like to be a nurse's aide so I could work with people all the time.

George: You speak of working with people, but you emphasize your love of children. Can you devote some time to writing a piece explaining why?

Student: Sure.

## Student's Draft

If I get a job here in York Hospital, I would like for it to be where the children are because they are easier to get along with. I don't know why, but I guess it's because I had to take care of all my sister's and brother's children when I was growing up.

Well, I like to work with older people too, because they are sometimes just like children. That's why I would like to work at a nursing home. And they need help more than any others. Some are very old and can't eat by themselves. So for a change I think I would like to be a nurse's aide.

## Conference 8

George: Wow! This piece is really starting to cook! You have all that you need for the remaining task of putting it together. Do you have a feel for this editing challenge?

Student: Yes, I know what I want to do. I'll do it right now.

George: Great. I'll help you with some spelling and punctuation proofreading when you are ready.

## Revised Piece

I like working in the hospital because everyone there is nicer than at any other place I have worked. I don't know if it was the children I liked so much or my job.

The children would come in the room where I was and talk to me. They wanted me to play with them, but I had to do my work first. When I got my work finished, I would sing, and in a little while all the children were singing too. I could get along with the children better than the doctors or the RN's.

I worked at the __________ Hospital for about twelve years.

I started in the laundry and then went on to housekeeping on the children's ward. I washed the beds and cleaned the rooms. It wasn't hard to do the work. I liked this kind of work because no one was over me all the time. I worked like I wanted to, as long as the work was done by 4 o'clock. I guess I liked it because it was like my home. No one was hurrying me.

Even though I have not worked for a while, I would still like to work in a hospital. But this time I would like to be a nurse's aide in a hospital or a nursing home, so that I could work with the people all the time. If I get a job here in the York Hospital, I would like to be where the children are because they are easier to get along with. Maybe It's because I always took care of my sister's and brother's children when I was growing up.

If I don't get a job with children, I would like to work with older people because many of them are just like children. They need help more than any others. Some can't walk or eat by themselves. I guess I just love to help people, and that is why I would like to be a nurse's aide in a hospital or a nursing home.

********

Final Comment: In just a few months of ABE work, this student has become a more confident reader and writer. The piece that she has produced has also helped her to keep her employment-oriented goals in mind. Such writing process experiences often work to bring students and instructors closer together as collaborators, as WRITE-Now friends. Both work harder because of the caring and sharing.

## 1988 GED TESTS

## TEST 1

## WRITING SKILLS

## (PART ONE: MULTIPLE CHOICE)

CONTENT:

| | |
|---|---|
| SENTENCE STRUCTURE | 35% |
| USAGE | 35% |
| MECHANICS (CAPITALIZATION, PUNCTUATION, AND SPELLING) | 30% |

COGNITIVE LEVELS: (ALL APPLICATION)

FIND AND CORRECT ERRORS

IMPROVE THE WRITING OF THE PARAGRAPH

MAKE A MORE "COHERENT" WHOLE

NEW FORMAT: (MULTIPLE CHOICE)

10-12 SENTENCES OF CONNECTED DISCOURSE

ITEM TYPES:

SENTENCE CORRECTION: 50%

REPEATS ONE OF THE SENTENCES FROM THE PARAGRAPH AND ASKS WHAT CORRECTION SHOULD BE MADE. USED TO TEST ALL CONTENT AREAS.

SENTENCE REVISION: 35%

CONSISTS OF A STEM WITH A PART UNDERLINED THAT MAY OR MAY NOT CONTAIN AN ERROR. USED TO TEST SENTENCE STRUCTURE, USAGE, AND PUNCTUATION.

CONSTRUCTION SHIFT: 15%

CONSISTS OF A STEM WHICH MUST BE REWRITTEN USING A DIFFERENT STRUCTURE. USED TO TEST SENTENCE STRUCTURE, USAGE, AND PUNCTUATION.

# INSERVICE*

**This month our INSERVICE feature is from the booklet titled "The 1988 Tests of General Educational Development: A Preview." It is published and distributed free by the GED Test Service, American Council on Education, One DuPont Circle, NW, Washington, DC 20036. This excellent preview of the revised GED test contains information and examples from all 5 test areas. We have reduced the print size to fit our format.**

**Note: The 310 Project Proposal Review Committee for 1986-87 has indicated their concern as to the need for our INSERVI page. On the basis of the committee's comments we may discontinue this feature because commitee members indicate the material and information in INSERVICE is not useful, nor is being used by ABE teachers. Our space is limited and we want to use it for the benefit of BUZZ readers. We would appreciate hearing from you as to your ideas as to how to best use these two pages to your advantage. Write Box 214, Troy, PA 16947. Thanks.**

## Writing Skills, Part I

The Writing Skills test of the revised GED Tests is comprised of two parts, one part to test knowledge of the conventions of written English, and the second to test directly the ability to write. The scores earned on both components of the test will be combined and reported on a standard score scale as a single score. The recommendation that the test include a writing sample is a dramatic revision to the current test content. However, the Language Arts panel (and, indeed, the entire test specifications committee) expressed its view on this matter in no uncertain terms: "The English specifications panel believes that no one should receive credit for high school equivalency without being asked to demonstrate writing ability directly as well as indirectly."

### CONTENT

Part I of the Writing Skills test will resemble the current GED Writing Skills test in several ways. First, both the current test and a part of the revised test use a multiple choice format which presents items that require error recognition and correction. The revised test will include items in approximately the following proportions:

Sentence Structure: 35%
Usage: 35%
Mechanics (spelling, punctuation, and capitalization): 30%

In the current Writing Skills test, 30% of the items are Sentence Structure/Diction and Style, 30% are Usage, and 25% are Mechanics. The remaining 15% in the current test consists of items in Logic and Organization, which will be measured directly in the essay component of the revised Test One.

### CONTEXT

The subject matter for the Writing Skills test, Part I includes those topics with which the examinee is likely to be familiar. Relevant subjects may include topics of practical interest such as consumer affairs, career skills, and computer awareness or subjects of more general interest such as vacations, health, family life, and education.

### FORMAT

As adults usually need to write and proofread connected pieces of discourse, Part I directly measures proofreading skills in the more realistic setting of paragraphs. These paragraphs are 10-12 sentences long and, when corrected, are examples of good writing.

Some of the sentences within each paragraph contain errors which students must locate and correct. In some cases the sentences do not contain errors but require revision for the sake of clarity or logic. The errors to be corrected are those most often encountered in student writing, most complained about by the public, and most likely to hamper a person's advancement, acceptance, or ability to communicate effectively to various audiences. The sentence to be corrected is repeated in each item and the alternatives (or answers) are presented in the order in which they occur in the sentence.

In at least half of the items (or questions), the alternatives do not appear by categories. That is, alternatives for each item may often be from any of the five content areas—again in an attempt to create a realistic proofreading situation. (This range of alternatives is found in the sentence correction item type described below.)

### ITEM TYPES

The items in the Writing Skills test, Part I are classified by item type. "Item type" refers to the method by which the content areas are tested and by which the examinee is asked to respond. The three item types are used in the following proportions:

(1) Sentence Correction: 50%
(2) Sentence Revision: 35%
(3) Construction Shift: 15%

Examples of each type are provided below.

#### Item Type 1: Sentence Correction

This item type is used to test skills in all content areas of the Writing Skills Test, Part I. The sentence correction item type repeats one of the sentences from the paragraph and asks what correction should be made. Several examples are given of this type with different content areas and categories.

#### Item Type 2: Sentence Revision

This item type is used to test skills in the content areas of Sentence Structure, Usage, and Punctuation. The sentence revision format consists of a stem with a part underlined that may or may not contain an error in sentence structure. The alternatives which follow list various possible corrections to the underlined section of the stem. In this item type, the first alternative is always exactly the same as the original sentence.

#### Item Type 3: Construction Shift

This item type is used to test skills in the content areas of Sentence Structure and Punctuation. The construction shift type consists of a stem which must be rewritten using a different structure. The sentence which results from the revision must have the same meaning as the original sentence and must be correct and clearly stated. While the items in sentence correction and sentence revision item types usually contain errors, construction shift stems do not. These items aim at testing an examinee's ability to employ alternate structures correctly rather than the ability to correct errors. Implicitly, logic skills are also tested here, as well as an understanding of sequence of events.

### COGNITIVE LEVELS

All items tested in the Writing Skills test, Part I are at the application level and classified by item types, as described above.

The following is a sample paragraph appropriate for Part I of the Writing Skills test by virtue of its subject, length, and reading level. Following the paragraph are sample items illustrating a variety of item types, content areas and categories.

## Sample Paragraph

Directions: The following items are based on a paragraph which contains numbered sentences. Some of the sentences may contain errors in sentence structure, usage, or mechanics. A few sentences, however, may be correct as written. Read the paragraph and then answer the items based on it. For each item, choose the answer that would result in the most effective writing of the sentence or sentences. The best answer must be consistent with the meaning and tone of the rest of the paragraph.

(1)Computer programs are sets of specialized instructions. (2)Programs, stored on magnetic disks, are also known as software. the hardware is the computer itself. (3)A program talks to a computer. (4)It tells a computer how to perform certain tasks, such as word processing or accounting. (5)The computer reads the program disk electronically by spinning it. (6)When you type on the keyboard you provide the computer with information and commands. (7)The program manual explains which keys, or combination of keys, will activate these commands. (8)For instance, in word processing their are commands to delete words and sentences. (9)The program translates what you type into electronic impulses that the computer understands. (10)At the same time, the program translated electronic impulses from the computer into words and numbers on the screen. (11)With this technology, businesses can rely on computers for everything from inventories to accounting. (12)At home, individuals can write letters balance the family budget, and even shop for groceries. (13)The capabilities of computers are changing every day and with them the way we live our lives.

# Sample Writing Skills Test Items

1. Sentence 2: Programs, stored on magnetic disks, are also known as **software, the hardware** is the computer itself.

Which of the following is the best way to write the bold type portion of this sentence? If you think the original is the best way, choose option (1).

(1) software, the hardware
(2) software the hardware
(3) software. The hardware
(4) software, so the hardware
(5) software and the hardware

2. Sentences 3 & 4: A program talks to a computer. It tells a computer how to perform certain tasks, such as word processing or accounting.

The most effective combination of sentences 3 and 4 would include which of the following groups of words?

(1) It talks to a computer
(2) A program tells a computer how
(3) and it tells a computer
(4) or it tells a computer
(5) A program performs certain tasks

3. Sentence 5: The computer reads the program disk **electronically by spinning it.**

Which of the following is the best way to write the bold type portion of this sentence? If you think the original is the best way, choose option (1).

(1) electronically by spinning it.
(2) electronically. By spinning it.
(3) electronically, by spinning it.
(4) electronically; by spinning it.
(5) electronically, however by spinning it.

4. Sentence 6: When you type on the keyboard you provide the computer with information and commands.

What correction should be made to this sentence?

(1) change type to typed
(2) change the spelling of keyboard to keybored
(3) insert a comma after keyboard
(4) change provide to provides
(5) no correction is necessary

5. Sentence 8: For instance, in word processing their are commands to delete words and sentences.

What correction should be made to this sentence?

(1) change the spelling of instance to instanse
(2) remove the comma after instance
(3) replace their with there
(4) change are to is
(5) no correction is necessary

6. Sentence 10: At the same time, the program translated electronic impulses from the computer into words and numbers on the screen.

What correction should be made to this sentence?

(1) replace At the same time with Because
(2) remove the comma after time
(3) change translated to translates
(4) insert a comma after impulses
(5) no correction is necessary

7. Sentence 11: With this technology, busineses can rely on computers for everything from inventories to accounting.

What correction should be made to this sentence?

(1) remove the comma after technology
(2) change the spelling of busineses to businesses
(3) change can rely to could have relied
(4) insert a comma after computers
(5) change the spelling of inventories to inventorys

8. Sentence 12: At home, individuals can write letters balance the family budget, and even shop for groceries.

What correction should be made to this sentence?

(1) remove the comma after home
(2) insert a comma after letters
(3) change the spelling of budget to buget
(4) change shop to shopping
(5) insert a comma after shop

9. Sentence 13: The capabilities of computers are changing every day and with them the way we live our lives.

If you rewrote sentence 13 beginning with
Our lives are being changed every day
the next words should be

(1) by
(2) so
(3) and
(4) that
(5) therefore

## Answer Key

1. Content: Sentence structure
Category: Run-on sentence
Item Type: Sentence revision
Answer: 3

This item is similar to those used in the Diction and Style/Sentence Structure section of the current Writing Skills Test. The important difference is that the current test presents sentences of this type in isolation, while the revised test presents the sentences in paragraph contexts. The problem being tested in this case (a comma splice) is also a content area in the present test.

2. Content: Sentence structure
Category: Coordination/subordination
Item Type: Construction Shift
Answer: 2

This item goes beyond mere sentence correction. The focus in this item type is usually on improving or varying a structure rather than on correcting an error. Because the item alternatives provide only the operative parts of the combined sentence, examinees must follow — at least partially — a process of composing sentences. This item type more closely imitates the actual process of writing. The correct answer is a simplified, clearer combination of the two sentences.

3. Content: Sentence structure
Category: Sentence Fragment
Item Type: Sentence Revision
Answer: 1

The directions state explicitly that some sentences "may be correct as written." This item tests the ability to identify not an error but the correct absence of punctuation. Any other alternatives would either break the flow of thought or create a sentence fragment.

4. Content: Punctuation
Category: Comma after introductory elements
Item Type: Sentence Correction
Answer: 3

Note that this item includes "no correction is necessary" as the fifth alternative. Approximately half of the sentence correction items include this option as alternative 5, and it sometimes is the correct answer.

5. Content: Mechanics
Category: Use of troublesome homonyms
Item Type: Sentence Correction
Answer: 3

This item tests the frequent misuse of the homonyms there and their. This kind of mechanical error is usually tested by the sentence correction item type.

6. Content: Usage
Category: Verb Tense
Item Type: Sentence Correction
Answer: 3

Note that this item requires the examinee to refer back to the entire paragraph in order to select the verb form that is consistent with the verb tense established earlier. The directions which precede paragraphs in the Writing Skills test, Part I specifically alert examinees that their corrections must be consistent with the meaning and tone of the overall paragraph. Therefore, items which do rely upon the total context of the paragraph test only the categories of pronoun preference and very tense errors. In each paragraph there are usually one or two items which require this kind of consideration of the total context.

7. Content: Mechanics
Category: Spelling
Item Type: Sentence Correction
Answer: 2

As with all spelling alternatives, the word business appears on the Master List of Frequently Misspelled Words. Examinees are also asked to know the plural, comparative, superlative, and adverbial forms of these words where applicable.

8. Content: Punctuation
Category: Commas in a series
Item Type: Sentence Correction
Answer: 2

Observe that here, as in all the items, each alternative is considered in the order in which it appears in the sentence.

9. Content: Sentence Structure
Category: Subordination
Item Type: Construction Shift
Answer: 1

Here the examinee is asked to change the structure of the sentence while retaining the original meaning. This item type demands the ability to manipulate words and phrases rather than identify errors. As a consequence, sentences tested by construction shift do not contain any errors. The ability to subordinate both clauses and ideas is tested in this item.

*From: What's The Buzz? WRITE-Now instructors in PA should be Buzz readers!

## Writing Skills Test - Part I

## SENTENCE REWRITE-NOW!

After collecting some essay writing samples from GED candidates, sentence rewrite exercises can help the instructor to show students that revision might involve rewriting sentences that are vague, weak, run-on, or otherwise a problem for the reader/judge. Sentence rewriting is a good way to introduce the depth concept of genuine revision as opposed to mere surface editing and cosmetic alterations to the text.

Example

Rewrite: After collecting some essay writing samples from GED candidates, sentence rewrite exercises can . . . .

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Revision: After collecting some essay samples from GED students, the instructor can use sentence rewrite exercises . . . . (the long introductory phrase should describe the instructor)

---

In the examples presented below, we give the student's original sentence from a practice GED essay. We then present illustrations of how the student attempted to improve the message and flow through rewriting.

Example of Sentence Rewrite from Student Essay - 1

I know when I achieve the GED goal it will allow me to move into most any area I choose to cultivate my skills and if needed more educational courses.

1.) The goal to have my GED will give me credits and the possibility to be eligible for better employment.

2.) The GED goal is like a corner stone. It will open many doors of opportunity.

3.) Having my GED will give me the confidence to pursue other areas of knowledge.

Now that illustrates a sincere effort to rewrite-revise for the WRITE reasons! The student decided to use the third rewrite when she rewrote-revised the practice essay.

Student Rewrite Example - 2

In a home situation of studying, the problem may have a problem and there is a teacher or instructor and give him the help needed.

1.) In a home setting situation of studying, if the student has some problem there is no teacher to help.

2.) In the GED class there are many ways in which the student preparing for the GED test is given more help than is the student who is studying at home for his GED.

3.) In the home situation of studying, the student may have a problem or problems. But, he has no teacher or instructors to give guidance and the help he needs in solving his problem or problems.

The student worked through the second rewrite to develop a good opening paragraph.

Student Rewrite Example - 3

By attending school I can learn better than at home, it is so many things around that you can't study like you should.

1.) By attending school I can learn better than I can at home. At school I can concentrate on studying for my GED.

2.) Being at home it is so many things around to take you from your studying. At school you can concentrate on what you are doing.

3.) I can study better at school than at home. At home I don't keep studying, I always doing other things.

The student used her first rewrite to get into the point about being able to concentrate better at school. She was also able to see material for paragraph development in the other rewrites. The act of revising one sentence lead to a significant improvement in the entire paragraph.

Sentence rewriting is a challenging activity for most ABE/GED students. They must look at their writing from an interested and careful reader's point of view. They must go deep into the meaning of their texts to determine whether what they wrote is what they were intending to say. We urge ABE/GED instructors to exercise caution in leading students through this activity. We must help our students to see that this effort can result in a better piece of writing.

*******

When we write for real people and spend the serious time and attention it takes to think of their needs and imagine their response, we learn a lot about our own thinking. We learn to be our own teachers by internalizing a voice that gives us new power over our own writing - the voice of a serious, responding reader.

From: Linda S. Flower in
English Journal
January 1983

## Writing Skills Test - Part I

## ERRORS ANALYSIS EXERCISES

"The study shows that one clear way to increase writers' success at detecting errors in both their own and in essays by others is to provide them feedback on an error's location."

From: "The Editing Process in Writing: A Performance Study of More Skilled and Less Skilled College Writers," by Glynda Hull in Research in the Teaching of English, February 1987.

*******

As the following page demonstrates, informal errors analysis exercises are, if combined with direct writing activities aimed at communicating a message, often very effective in helping ABE/GED students to spot and correct common errors in their drafts.

The instructor can mark the location of errors in student writing by underlining, checking, or using an easily taught set of symbols. The student is expected to study the marked draft and correct the errors.

Spelling Errors - 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 12, 16, 17

Incorrect Punctuation - 2, 4(punctuation missing), 11, 14, 17A

Missing Phrase - 6

Missing Word(s) - 9, 13

Numbers Should Be Written - 10

Dependent Clauses That Can't Stand Alone - 15, 18

Ask the student to correct the errors to the best of his or her ability. When you go over the corrected draft, take the time to teach specific error recognition and correction options. Later, after the student has worked through a few more errors analysis exercises, you can ask the student to keep a grammar log of his or her most troublesome grammar or mechanics problems. Adult students want to know what they can do to improve their writing which is headed for other readers/judges.

## ERRORS ANALYSIS EXERCISE

1.
I will be thinking of the agencys that I would like to

2. 3. 4.
see . with in the advocate program I have come up with nine off the

5.
top of my head. They are, in order of importince, ___________,

and ____________.

6. 8.
My questions to Penny will be a over all look at the prepams

9.
she in.

10. 11.
I think it will be 3 to 5 years. before I get the advocate

program going.

12.
I still think the advoctae program has to be national. I will be

13. 14. 15.
looking at it from York County perspective. Hoping the progam

16. 17. 17. A
will be come one that can be modale. That can be picked up nationally.

18.
When I say three to five years for groundwork. If things go as I

hope.

## ERRORS ANALYSIS EXERCISE

Underlined word(s) - look for spelling error.
Underlined space - look for punctuation opportunities.
Underlined punctuation - correct it.
Wavy line - phrase probably needed.
Insert mark - word(s) missing. First word underlined -Probably a fragment.

I will be thinking of the agencys that I would like to see . with in the advocate program I have come with nine off the top of my head. They are in order of importince ___________, and ______________.

My questions to Penny will be a over all look at the prepams she in.

I think it will be 3 to 5 years. before I get the advocate program going.

I still think the advoctae program has to be national. I will be looking at it from York County perspective. Hoping the progam will be come one that can be modale. That can be picked up nationally. When I say three to five years for groundwork. If things go as I hope.

## Sample of What to Expect From Students - Errors Analysis

Error(s)

1. Agencies - OK
2. I shouldn't have used a period there. I'm not sure why I put one in that spot.
3. Within - OK
4. Period. That is where I should have a period. My first sentence ends after program.
5. Importance - OK
6. I could put in = based on.
7. Overall - OK. It should be an overall look.
8. Programs - OK. That was just carelessness.
9. I missed is.
10. OK, three and five should be written.
11. I did it again. I don't need the period.
12. Advocate - OK.
13. I missed a.
14. The period could be a comma, and I could continue the sentence with hoping.
15. OK, I took care of that.
16. Become - OK
17. Modeled - OK
17. A - I could have used a comma after modeled.
18. This is hard. I think I'll correct it by using a comma and writing ", I mean if things go as I hope."

---

This student didn't do as well the first time he was asked to correct the errors in his writing. He is working on his spelling by keeping a list of his personal spelling "demons," and he is beginning to understand the punctuation of complex and compound sentences.

Teaching Tips for WRITE-Now Errors Analysis

1.) Identify errors - the location of - only on drafts that are headed somewhere. Students will respond much better if they can see how their writing is being edited or proofread for some kind of publication or evaluation.

2.) Do this activity only when you have determined the student to be in a WRITE-Now mood. For most ABE/GED students, such an exercise would probably succeed after you have discussed or held conferences on the development of three or four pieces. You are also in a much better position to know what to expect.

3.) Don't insist that students become grammarians in the sense that they need to use all of the correct grammar terminology. If they can correct fragments, who cares what formal explanations they can give?

4.) Start off by identifying only a few kinds of errors. Encourage students to note their corrections and explanations in their notebooks.

5.) Save time and frustration by marking the location of errors directly in their notebooks or on their composition paper.

6.) Go through a few Part I editing exercises in the new GED Writing Skills Test preparation texts and workbooks. Show students how errors analysis exercises help to prepare them for both parts of the test. They'll see and appreciate the connections.

# 1988 GED TESTS

## TEST 1

## (PART TWO: ESSAY)

CONTENT:

SINGLE TOPIC WITH WHICH ALL EXAMINEES WILL BE FAMILIAR

COGNITIVE LEVELS: (SYNTHESIS/EVALUATION)

COMPOSE, ORGANIZE, AND PRODUCE AN ESSAY ON THE TOPIC--

TAKE A POSITION, ARGUE FOR IT, AND ILLUSTRATE WITH EXAMPLES

OR

PRESENT AN EXPLANATION OF AN ISSUE OR IDEA

DETAILS:

45 MINUTES; SUGGESTED LENGTH OF "ABOUT 200 WORDS"

BRIEF "PROMPT" SETTING UP THE TASK AND
SUGGESTING AN APPROACH WHICH EMPHASIZES WRITING PROCESS

PAPERS SCORED "HOLISTICALLY" ON A 1-6 SCALE
BY TWO READERS INDEPENDENTLY;
A THIRD READER IS USED IF SCORES DIFFER BY 2 OR MORE POINTS

ESSAY SCORE COMBINED WITH MULTIPLE-CHOICE SCORE FOR A SINGLE REPORTED SCORE ON TEST ONE

FEASIBILITY STUDIES

# Administration and Scoring of the 1988 Writing Skills Test

FROM: GED Items, Jan./Feb. 1987.

GED Items is published bimonthly by the GED Testing Service of the American Council on Education.

Write to:

GED Testing Service
American Council on Ed.
One Dupont Circle - Suite 20
Washington, D.C. 20036-1193

**Two frequently asked questions about the essay part of the 1988 GED Writing Skills Tests are:**
1) "How long will students ~~have~~ to write their essay?" and 2) "How much will the essay count?"

The Writing Skills Test will consist of two parts: Part I is the 55 item multiple choice portion which has a time limit of 75 minutes. Part II is the essay portion on which examinees will have 45 minutes to work. However, these two parts of the Writing Skills Test will be administered *together* with a two hour total time limit. Examinees who finish the multiple choice part in less than 75 minutes may go on to the essay. Examiners will ~~announce when 45~~ minutes remain and that examinees should begin work on Part II (the essay) if they have not done so already. If examinees complete their essay before the two hour time limit, they may return to the multiple choice portion. Our data suggest that the vast majority of examinees will find the two hour time limit adequate. Most examinees have ample time to organize their thoughts about the essay topic and review what they have written.

The Writing Skills composite standard score (on the usual 20 to 80 scale) will be based on weights of between 60 and 65 percent for the multiple choice part and 35 to 40 percent for the essay. (Relative weights will vary slightly from topic to topic due to slight differences in essay topic score distributions.) These weights are in keeping with the recommendations of the Test Specifications and GED Advisory Committees. These weights give the largest weight to the essay possible without diminishing the overall reliability of the Writing Skills Test score below acceptable levels. It is important to note that the essay raw score will *not* be reported separately because it is not sufficiently reliable to warrant attempts at interpretation. Additional information on the weighting of the essay and formation of the Writing Skills composite standard score will be included in future GED Testing Service publications. The Teacher's Manual for the Official GED Practice Tests (available by July of 1987) will contain tables which will enable teachers to determine the predicted Writing Skills composite standard score from the essay and multiple choice raw scores. Weighting of these two scores will be taken care of by reading the table appropriately.

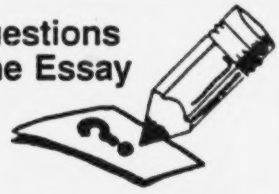
## SOME WRITE-ON INFORMATION FROM GED ITEMS - MAY/JUNE 1987

### Essays and Disabled Students

**Although the specific language for the 1988 Examiner's Manual has not yet been written, we'd like to state our intention with respect to the essays written by students with certain physical disabilities.** *All* GED examinees will be responsible for producing written responses to the essay question. Those who are unable to produce a written response without assistance are to be given the opportunity to produce a draft response, and edit it, in any acceptable manner. (Acceptable, here, means any way that clearly results in a written composition produced and edited by the individual student.) For example, an examinee who is unable to hold a pen will be permitted to type a response using any adapted keyboard, stylus, etc. Similarly, he or she would be permitted to dictate an answer to be copied verbatim by an amanuensis. All these ways, and others, would be acceptable for producing the initial draft. Similarly, the editing can be done by any acceptable means. In all cases, the result is a completed piece of writing that will be scored in exactly the same way as those produced in the standard fashion; the Writing Skills Test score will, of course, consist of a composite of multiple choice and essay portions for all examinees. At this time, we do not see the need (nor do we intend) to "waive" the essay portion for any examinee; obviously, on the other hand, we have to be quite willing to accommodate the physical disabilities that make writing with a pen impossible.

**What will happen if an examinee turns in a blank paper, an illegible essay, or an "off-topic" essay?**

### More Questions About the Essay



**Some have asked what will happen if an examinee turns in a blank paper, an illegible essay, or an "off-topic" essay (i.e., one written on a topic other than the one assigned). It is important for everyone to note that *no* score can be reported for the Writing Skills Test if the examinee's essay is blank, illegible, or "off-topic." As a result, the examinee will have to take the *entire* Writing Skills Test again.**

## Some WRITE-Now Observations and Illustrations on the Development of GED Essay Topics

During one of our early WRITE-Now team meetings, we decided to try our hands at composing practice essay topics for our students to use. We had been inspired by Charles Herring's comments in the Spring 1986 issue of The Adult Learner. Herring wrote that an important or "lasting outcome of a high school education is the ability to form reasonable opinions about the major issues facing the world." He went on to explain that reasonable opinions are those based on facts and reached through accepted logic.

Because Herring's unit was in complete harmony with an article on essay topic specifications which originally appeared in an issue of GED Items, we were eager to come up with some major issues facing the world and try to write some original essay prompts. Here are three of our attempts.

### Topic 1

Biological Engineering and Medical Breakthroughs-Ethics and Practices

Much has been published about organ transplants from one human being to another, usually for the purpose of prolonging the life of the person receiving the donated organ. Heart transplant surgery has often been highly publicized, and, as of this date, not very successful in terms of significantly prolonging the lives of the recipients. Now there is speculation about the possibility of neurological transplantations even to the extreme of transplanting the human brain. How far can it or should it all go?

********

Take a position basically in favor of organ transplant surgery or against it, or in favor of some kinds and opposed to others. Explain or justify your position(s).

Comment: Were we for real? Could we expect graduate students to do something worthwhile with this prompt and topic? Would we be likely to get overly-emotional responses from student writers? Was our topic clearly and simply stated? No, this topic wasn't good enough.

Topic 2

World - Wide Racial Conflict and Tension

Racial conflicts and tensions have been a problem for mankind for thousands of years. Recently we have seen, heard, and read a great deal about the racial problems in South Africa.

Do you see any hope for peaceful resolution of these problems in South Africa or anywhere else in the world?

********

If you do have some ideas about how the problem can be resolved, present them and give explanations for your solution(s). If you don't feel that peaceful solutions are possible, explain your position.

Comment: OK, we thought this topic was more in line with the GED essay topic specifications, but how much had most of our students seen, heard, or read on the racial tensions in South Africa? And, again, would we be asking for overly-emotional responses? Probably. Well, let's try another one.

Topic 3

The Future - What will it bring? How will we cope? How is technology changing our world?

As we move from the industrial age to the information age, from economies based on manufacturing to economies based on service, what do you feel man should do to use high technology for the betterment of the earth, its plant life, and all living creatures? What other kinds of things must we do to ensure that our children's children will have a good future?

Comment: Now even our WRITE-Now happy person was frustrated! The topic had some really exciting possibilities, but it just expected too much from our students in 45 minutes. How much had they thought about modern technology? What did they know about computers, etc.? Certainly, the topic offered an idea that examinees would view as worth writing about, but was it clearly stated and did it contain only the amount of information necessary to provide the prompt for writing? We decided to do some more thinking and writing on this topic. At least, if we did nothing else with it, it might be a good topic to put on a list of options for practice essays. That would solve a few essay specification problems.

*******

The team concluded that the business of coming up with good essay topics was a lot harder than it looked. No more of this for us! We were going to use the zillions of sample/practice essay topics available in the new GED texts and workbooks. We learned a great deal about writing essay topics. That made the two hours of tension worthwhile. We would be better prepared to help our students examine the demands and scope of their practice essay topics. We would be more empathetic instructors.

If you, dear reader, would like to submit sample essay topic prompts to the GED Testing Service, please review the page from GED Items which we include in this manual. It might pay you $50.00!

# GED ESSAY TOPICS: SOME SPECIFICATIONS . . . AND AN INVITATION*

Essay topics, like all other items to be used on the GED Tests, undergo a rigorous scrutiny before they are included on a final form. The process begins, logically enough, with the writing of "raw" topics that address the test specifications. In the case of the essay topics to be used on the GED Writing Skills test, the following general specifications must be met:

- The topic must be based upon information or a situation that is general enough to be familiar to most examinees.
- The topic must offer an idea that examinees view as worth writing about.
- The topic should not elicit an overly-emotional response from the writer.
- The topic should be clearly stated and contain only the amount of information necessary to provide the prompt for writing.

Only topics which meet these specifications become eligible for field-testing with GED examinees and with high school seniors. After topics are field-tested, the papers written on topics are holistically scored by experienced readers who use the 6-point GED Essay Scoring Guide. This type of "scoring session" differs significantly from one concerned solely with producing scores for essays. In this "topic selection reading," readers are asked not only to score the papers using the Scoring Guide, but also to evaluate how well the topic is working. Readers evaluate topics according to the following specifications:

- **The topic should elicit papers with characteristics comparable to those described in the essay scoring guide.** If, for example, the best papers written on a field-test topic seem significantly less accomplished than those described in the six (top score) category in the scoring guide, the topic may be more difficult for writers than desirable and therefore unusable. In the interests of making all of the topics as equal as possible in difficulty, all papers produced by the topics must conform to the scoring guide. If the papers exhibit characteristics that are clearly different from those described in the scoring guide, the topic will be rejected; the scoring guide will *not* be revised to conform to a new topic.
- **The topic should elicit papers which illustrate the full range of student writing ability.** A good topic allows strong writers to display their skill in writing, yet still allows weak writers access to the question. Because the field tests involve significant numbers of examinees and seniors, the total pool of papers produced for a topic should include essays at all points on the six point scale.
- **The topic should elicit papers which clearly address the question provided.** If papers written on a topic consistently show that writers are unclear about the question asked, or if an unusual number of writers are writing on a topic other than the one asked, the topic is ineffective. A topic which fails to meet this criterion was probably not clearly stated to begin with.
- **The topic should elicit a variety of responses.** To say that all papers must address the topic is not to say that all papers must appear the same. A good topic will yield papers whose ideas mirror the diversity of the population tested. Papers with a wide range of ideas will be less tedious for readers to score, and thus readers are likely to score more accurately. While scoring large numbers of papers--inevitably becomes-tiresome, a good topic produces papers that engage readers' interest to the extent possible.
- **The topic should elicit fully-developed responses.** A topic which yields a large proportion of incomplete papers may be too demanding for the time allowed. If papers consistently exhibit a shallowness of thought and inadequate development, examinees might not have enough information immediately at hand to write well about the topic.
- **The topic should not elicit an emotional or biased response from readers.** In the same way that care is taken not to trigger emotional reactions from writers, the resulting papers must not fuel preconceptions or biases among readers. Essay readers are urged to evaluate the writing, not the writer or the writer's values, and the scoring process contains numerous checks of this standard. However, readers cannot be expected to remain immune from emotional reactions, so an effective topic produces few papers that are likely to set off an emotional response in readers.
- **The topic elicits papers for which readers can readily agree on scores.** Readers should be able to distinguish upper half (6,5,4) from lower half (3,2,1) papers with relative ease. Where these distinctions are blurred, the topic itself may well be at fault. Among the many statistical checks on a topic's performance is the rate at which readers agree on scores for particular papers; a significant rate of disagreement among readers often indicates that the topic is yielding papers that cannot reliably be scored using the standards provided.

At this point, you may be wondering how GED ever hopes to produce even a single operational topic that passes all of these stipulations (along with a few others relating to topic equating). In the spring of 1985, GEDTS field tested fifteen topics with a national sample of high school seniors, and six of the topics were judged acceptable for use in operational forms. To produce the fifteen for field testing, however, they began with well over a hundred topic ideas.

## Your Turn

A good topic requires, first and foremost, a good idea—the posing of a question or issue that significantly touches the experience of people from 17 to 90 who have richly diverse backgrounds. Experience has shown that only one out of many such ideas has enough merit to get to the field test, but that the odds of surviving the field test may be as high as one out of three.

So, send GED your ideas for essay topics—and they'll pay you if your ideas are good! If the topic you submit survives to the point where it is field tested, you will be paid an honorarium of $50. The honorarium secures exclusive rights to the topic for the GED Testing Service, and they cannot inform you as to whether or not your topic will be used in an operational form because that would compromise the topic.

If you are interested in trying your hand at writing topics, follow the format of the sample topic provided in *GED Items,* II,4. Contact the Project office for a copy of this format. Submit as many as you like. They will consider all entries and pay you for every one they use in a field test. Because they develop tests on a continuing basis, there is no closing date for this offer.

Send your topics to: Essay Topics, GED Testing Service, American Council on Education, One Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C. 20036-1193.

(From *GED Items,* Vol. 3 #1, January 1986.)

* * * * *

*He has the right to criticize who has the heart to help.*
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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*From: PA Writing Project Newsletter, Fall 1986

# STUDENTS LEARN BY DOING HOLISTIC SCORING*

John O. White

I believe *holistic* scoring, the method used in mass testing, can be useful and interesting for both teachers and students. The word *holistic* reminds us that it is the paper as a whole we should evaluate, not merely its parts. Printed below is a typical holistic scoring guide; however, we should construct our own guides to emphasize particular writing concerns and then change them to reflect current emphases.

> *Instructions for Using the Scoring Guide:* (1) Read the paper quickly to get a general impression. (2) In evaluating, keep in mind the characteristics described below. (3) Assign the score which reflects the overall quality of each paper.
>
> *Possible Scores:*
>
> 6—Papers scored 6 will address all parts of the question and will be well organized. They will be fluent with good language control and sentence variety. They will be distinguished by details supporting or illustrating all points. There may be a few mechanical errors, but generally these will be superior papers.
>
> 5—Papers scored 5 will address all parts of the question and will be well organized. They may be less developed or detailed than 6 papers with possibly more mechanical problems, but they will have good language control with a clear statement of thesis.
>
> 4—These papers will be competent and cover all parts of the question, but they may not be so well organized as 6 or 5 papers. They will be fluent, though there will probably not be as much development or as many details. Papers may contain minor mechanical errors.
>
> 3—This score is appropriate for papers which ignore one or more parts of the assignment. They may be vague, general, abstract, or undeveloped with few supporting details. There may be problems in syntax, diction, or organization. These papers may be too brief, too general, or may have too many mechanical problems to be scored higher.
>
> 2—These papers will be thin in content or have serious problems in mechanics.
>
> 1—This score will be given to papers which show little understanding of the question or mechanics of writing.

Group reading of many papers involves several steps. A leader ordinarily directs the entire grading session and provides sample papers for teachers at tables (usually five to six per table) to grade according to the guide. After reading a number of sample papers and discussing the characteristics, teachers are usually able to come to some agreement on the score given each successive sample. Tables also have individual leaders who read random papers already scored by individual graders. These table leaders will try to find (and correct) anyone scoring a little too high or low in comparison with the scoring guide and the other readers. Papers are scored by two readers. If there is a discrepancy of more than one point between the two scores, an experienced reader will resolve the discrepancy by providing a third score.

I believe principles of holistic scoring can lead students to an understanding of what is expected in an essay. It is more than just having students read papers written by their classmates. They need a scoring guide, and students must reach a consensus on grades assigned. As they find that they can recognize various kinds of papers (and scores), they begin to recognize what sets better papers apart from weaker ones. They understand why other readers assign particular scores to their papers, and, in my experience, they improve their writing considerably as they see what otherwise vague terms like *development, detail,* and *organization* mean.

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* Reproduction of this article authorized by the NCTE. It appeared in the November 1982 issue of the English Journal.

To use holistic techniques in my classroom, I give a timed writing assignment, taking care that it requires no particular knowledge outside the question itself. For example:

> Almost all of us watch television. We may watch sports programs, situation comedies, movies, documentaries, wild life shows, dramas, etc. Think of the kinds of programs you particularly like to watch. *Writing Assignment:* Describe one kind of program you particularly enjoy. Explain the attractions of that kind of program. What do you think your choice of TV programs says about you?

The next day I distribute a scoring guide and discuss it with the class. I read sample papers aloud as I project them on a screen using an opaque projector. I ask the class to write down a score and a reason (according to the scoring guide) for assigning such a score. We may differ in our initial evaluations, but after discussion and examination of specifics, we usually come close to agreement. I might do this for eight or ten papers from the class, keeping them anonymous as we examine them closely. I then grade and return the papers as usual, except that I assign a holistic score number instead of a letter grade.

A few days later I give a similar assignment and have the class write another timed essay. Next day, I divide the class into groups of five and distribute the papers—with student names on them. I have not found this a problem partly because I emphasize courtesy and tact, mostly because I monitor the discussion carefully and lean on any who might be discourteous. Other instructors may wish to use assigned numbers to preserve anonymity.

I ask each group to grade its batch of five papers, passing the papers around the group, writing their tentative grades and comments on scratch paper. When all the papers in a group have been read, one student leads the discussion in which the group decides on a consensus score and reasons for that score. I ask groups to write a positive comment about any paper to go along with any suggestions for improvement.

Group discussion is vital. Students really talk about writing and writing skills as they discuss the papers. They decide what ideas are expressed too generally and which need development. They check for detail. They notice (or have pointed out to them by others) mechanical problems. Finally they compile the list of scores and reasons in accordance with the scoring guide. I collect the results and the papers, holistically score them, and put my score, the group's score, and our various comments at the top of the page before I return the set of papers.

All papers in a given semester are not, of course, scored holistically; the traditional method of marking papers has its own value. But the holistic process has a positive effect on student writing. I'm convinced their papers and approaches change significantly in some specific areas as they go through the process. Usually mechanics are *not* much improved, except in cases of carelessness. Mostly the improvement is in fluency, organization, development, and detail.

I often ask a class to develop its own scoring guide. We do it as a group, using the blackboard and deciding what kinds of papers should receive particular scores. Then I might grade their next set of papers according to that scoring guide. Classes do a good job of defining what is important in a paper and identifying kinds of papers which should receive particular scores.

Trained student graders can quickly recognize particular kinds of problems. They can spot the average *three*—a brief, over-generalized paper with some mechanical problems. They can recognize the classic *four*—the paper that covers the topic, has some fluency, but not the detail and development of a *five* or *six*. Students learn to recognize common patterns and problems. It seems to me they *have* to learn to recognize before they can make effective changes in their own writing.

---

*John O. White teaches at California State University at Fullerton.*

## How We Adapted the Techniques and Procedures Described in John White's Article for WRITE-Now Purposes

We believe it is a good idea for both ABE/GED instructors and students to be introduced to the theory and methods of holistic scoring. Our experience as teachers of writing in ABE/GED programs supports White's position. Teachers who familiarize their students with holistic scoring guides and several sample essays actually written by their peers or adult students from similar programs will probably see subsequent improvement in the fluency, organization, development, and detail of their students' essays.

### In an Individualized ABE/GED Program

We prepared a prompt, using the same topic, and asked our students to write about their favorite television programs. We did not place any time restrictions on them because their participation and the extent of their involvement in WRITE-Now activities was always voluntary, always a matter of how much time and effort they were each willing to give to the project. We are pleased to note that most of the ABE/GED students in our individualized open entry-open exit program did choose to participate in this particular activity.

What we received from our students was a wide variety of responses, some only a few sentences long and some pieces in the 200-word GED essay sample range. Because we were not sure about what we would get from our volunteer writers, we found the whole process to be a very worthwhile experience. We learned that the topic didn't work very well with a few students. Some didn't have television at home, and some claimed that they didn't watch enough television to take a position or pick a favorite kind of show. We decided to have some essay topic options handy for future study just in case we might have similar student-topic incompatibility situations.

Another problem a few students had with this activity was centered around getting started, with knowing how they wanted to get into the essay and develop the topic. Rather than see these struggling writers become too frustrated with the activity, we intervened in the essay composition process by talking privately with each student about what was troubling him or her. Sometimes, with just a few minutes of support and illustration, students who were having start-up difficulties or "blocking" were able to get into the task. In a few other cases, it was very clear to us that the students were not in the WRITE mood. When that happened, we let them make lists, do some clustering or traditional outlining, or some other kind of mental percolating exercise. We then collected what they were able to get on paper so that we could try again at a later date. These early writing barriers or hesitancies were usually overcome by practice, patience, and appropriate teacher demonstration of the writing process skills at the heart of the problem. We felt it was our responsibility to deal with our reluctant writers in a warm, non-threatening manner, getting at the specific problem WRITE away. In other words, if getting started was a problem with a student, one of us would personally assist the student by quick-shifting from a writing assessment gear to a teaching gear.

When students were able to generate short essays longer than a few sentences, we followed through with the next step of the activity by letting them read what others had written on the same or similar topics. Then they had a chance to study holistic scoring guides and score their own essays. We agreed or disagreed with their self-assessments and explained why. Since most of the students who volunteered for WRITE-Now duties will have finished their ABE/GED studies before 1988, we did not have any problems with having to deflate or inflate student opinions of their ability to write short essays. To our delight, a few even took some additional time to revise their essays and ask for our reactions.

As we look to 1988 and beyond, we are confident that we will be able to keep most of our ABE/GED students working in the right direction in terms of their writing skills. Our adaptation of White's holistic scoring exercise taught us to expect significant differences in the ability of GED students to produce 200-word essays. The experience also convinced us that students are interested in reading the essays of their peers. We became more confident teachers because we saw our students becoming more competent writers. Again, patience, practice, and applied andragogy combined with process-conference techniques did seem to be justified for all of the WRITE reasons.

## In a Regular Classroom Setting

We'll switch pronoun usage to the first person singular because only I, George E. Rutledge, was fortunate enough to have an opportunity to adapt the holistic scoring exercise to a regular classroom situation.

I asked the students in my evening GED class to study the topic, spend five minutes or more thinking and planning, devote about twenty minutes to getting a first draft on paper, and spend the remaining time revising and editing their 200-word (give or take fifty words) essays. After giving them each a few sheets of lined composition paper, I sat in one of the student desks and tried to produce my own short essay.

Most of us were able to generate compositions that could be shared and scored. I collected the essays, told my students that we would discuss the writing and scoring process at our next meeting, and then gave a short lesson on pre-writing strategies. I needed time to read their essays and score them so that I would have a better feel for the range and scope of what the members of this GED class could do now with very little formal instruction.

Most of the essays were surprisingly in the score range of *three* to *five* on the six-point scale. Upon further analysis of the essays, I concluded that the topic worked well, that the students had been prepared informally by other less-threatening writing activities (they were more comfortable writing while others were writing), and that they did not constitute what I could honestly call an average group of GED students.

During the next class meeting I gave each student a copy of the scoring guide and discussed it with them *after* they had a few minutes to read it silently. Then I returned their essays and directed them to score their own essays and write a few sentences to me about why they had judged their essays to be a *two*, *three*, *four*, or *five*. No one had self-scored a *one* or a *six*.

I collected their essays and scoring justifications/explanations and then matched my scoring with each of theirs. While they worked on a reading exercise, I was able to write a sentence or two to each student. Near the end of the two-hour class, after working on math and social studies exercises, I returned their essays and invited them to comment or ask questions. Apparently I was lucky to have a capable, mature group of GED students who felt that the exercise was worthwhile even though they will probably all have their GED credentials long before 1988. If *you* are not an experienced GED teacher, I hope you have a similar class for your personal WRITE-Now growth.

Later in the semester I passed out sets of published essay samples on a different topic, gave each student a scoring guide, and again asked them to read and score the sample essays. The students generally agreed with the "expert" scoring which I shared after a short discussion of the essays. I see no reason why this kind of sharing and assessing activity won't work as well with future GED classes. My students-to-be should be even more curious about how their essays will be scored and how their in-class practice essays compare with the essays of their peers.

## Some Recommendations for Consideration by Our WRITE-Now Colleagues

1. Wait until the third or fourth class meeting before attempting to assign and collect a set of sample essays. Have students do some journal entries outside of class and involve them in some learning-centered, one-draft-only kinds of writing during the first few class meetings. Get them used to writing while others are also writing.

2. Take the time to introduce your students to an holistic scoring guide and get them to read several sample essays by their classmates or by other GED candidates.

3. Preview the essay scoring process and share the scores actually assigned to the sample essays. If you are an experienced teacher of writing in ABE/GED settings, you might prefer to score and respond to a set of essays as I did.

4. If you are courageous, jump right in and write the first sample or practice essay when the students are writing. Consider using a simple coding system or other method of keeping the identities of the writers, including yours, as anonymous as possible until the pieces have been read and scored. This approach will help to make everyone more comfortable with sharing and evaluating activities, especially at the start of your class writing program.

5. If you seem to be encountering some resistance, perhaps a student or two who are not able to get into the task of producing a short essay, be assured that it is not unusual to find GED students who have a lot of anxieties about writing on demand. Calmly and quietly let such a student know that you acknowledge his or her uneasiness. Tell the student that whatever is handed in will be helpful and appreciated. Tell students that incomplete samples will not be shared and critiqued. The good news here is that most of this initial resistance will probably not continue to be a problem. If you talk

about and demonstrate prewriting/planning techniques and use writing across the curriculum for learning rather than for evaluation purposes, it is quite likely that the reluctant writers in your GED class will eventually produce drafts that can be shared.

6. Having collected and studied this initial set of practice essays, select some common problems and give short WRITE-Now lessons on single issues. For example, you might discover that these initial essays are generally weak in terms of introductions or opening paragraphs. By taking a sample essay topic and discussing its possible directions and its demands upon the writer, you will help your students to think about the expectations of the reader(s). Another common problem you'll probably see from reading these inital essays is thinness of supporting detail, examples, and illustrations. Students will often state their opinions or take positions without giving their readers enough to substantiate what they are saying and where their compositions are headed. This very common problem of telling and not enough showing can be significantly resolved by comparing anonymous pieces which clearly illustrate the good use of supporting detail and the inadequate development of opinions and positions. We have found that an hour of class time focusing on this common weakness is well worth the effort. Subsequent practice essays do have more muscle on bone, more substance for the reader to grasp.

7. Several of the commercially published GED texts and workbooks, most of them very recent publications, contain a set or two of sample essays that actual GED students have written. These essays are often scored and analyzed in terms of the scoring guide. Because this very helpful material is readily available to ABE/GED practitioners, we did not feel it was necessary to include a full range of sample essays in our WRITE-Now manual. We did feel that a few illustrations with brief comments might help us show what we have tried to tell.

## WRITE-Now Project Research

Almost all of us watch television. We may watch sports programs, situation comedies, movies, documentaries, wild life shows, dramas, etc. Think of the kinds of programs you particularly like to watch.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT: Describe one kind of program you particularly enjoy. Explain the attractions of that kind of program. What do you think your choice of TV programs says about you?

---

In-Service Questions and Comments -

## From Initial Drafts on Television Topic

(Typed as Close as Possible to the Way They Were Written)

FROM: A Basic Literacy Student (ABE I)

I like to watch magnum p.i. and Scarcrow and Mrs. King. I like to watch Hunter and Madlock. and High ways to Heaven.

Comment - We were pleased with this student's efforts to respond to the first part of the prompt. Even though she had read the prompt aloud to us, what you see is "all she wrote." Be prepared to see possibilities for growth in the briefest of responses.

FROM: An ABE II Student

I (watch the) Oraph Winfree Show, I like her Show because she's down to earth, and she talks about important things that She thinks the public Should know About. I like to know what's going On in the world.

Comment - This student presents a specific program and offers a few reasons why she likes that program. We WRITE-Now teachers, the eternal optimists that we are, see some development possibilities here. When we asked the student for examples, she gave us several good supporting details and illustrations. Be prepared to get essays as short as this one.

FROM: An ABE/GED Student

I like to watch dramas and suspense programs. These programs allow you to use your imagination and draw lines of conclusions. They also allow a little room for error and corrections and challenge me. I feel this is much of my personality and character in general. but getting to the truth of a matter is most important.

Comment - This student tried to deal with most of the topic demands. The telling is clear and even provocative at the beginning, but the showing is yet to come. It's easy to see a higher level of writing skills in thisfirst practice essay/writing sample. In just a few months this student wrote coherent, adequately developed pieces.

FROM: A GED Candidate

I grew up with television. Television grew up with me. It was there when I was a child and when I was a teenager and it is there for me now too. My parents first T.V set was a black & white set. We could only get one station.

I have seen some good television recently. There was an ice skating competition that I enjoyed very much. A few weeks ago I saw a documentary about the early days of rock 'n roll. I got to see Buddy Holly and some other musicans that impressed me very much.

I guess television can be better or it can be worse. It can be enlightening and it can be crude or banal. It is a very powerful medium.

Comment - This initial practice essay, although only 125 words long, tells us that in a few months, if we can keep the student writing, she should be able to write at least a four essay when she takes the GED tests. The piece has an introduction, it consists of more than one parapgraph, and it indicates that the student has a fairly good vocabulary. Our next step will be to get this student into one of the new GED preparation texts. We'll begin by having her read about the demands of different essays topics/prompts. As she reads essay samples, she should pick up some organizational and support ideas.

### When, in the tutoring/teaching process, should we be concerned about pointing out student errors in spelling and punctuation?

We believe that WRITE-Now tutors and teachers should be familiar with what Tom Reigstad and Don McAndrew call the priority of concerns. Our approach to a piece of writing should focus on Higher Order Concerns (HOCs) and then on Lower Order Concerns (LOCs). As these names imply, some types of problems are more responsible for the low quality of a piece than others. Because our one-to-one conferences and group lessons with students are geared to improving their writing within reasonable time limits, these more serious problems - HOCs - must be given priority.

HOCs

Does the piece have a clear focus and a central thesis?

Is the voice or tone appropriate for the given audience and purpose?

Does the piece have effective organization and structure?

Is the piece adequately developed?

LOCs

Does the piece contain problems with awkward or incorrect sentence structure? What about problems with sentence length and variety?

Are punctuation errors getting in the way?

Does the piece indicate problems with usage?

Is spelling a problem? Is it a serious problem with this piece?

Our concerns are initially with HOCs. Although it isn't always easy to do, we try to ignore such surface problems as spelling and punctuation when we examine early drafts and confer with students. It is not the WRITE time to worry ourselves and our students about LOCs. We need to encourage fluency and help our students fill the pages of their lined composition books. When we have drafts with beginnings, lots of meat-and-muscle middles, and clear endings, _then_ we can fuss with LOCs. In _Floyd's Chapter_ we will describe how we took advantage of an opportunity to work on spelling and punctuation problems.

Reigstad and McAndrew have written a little book which we recommend to anyone who has teacher or tutor training responsibilities. _Training Tutors for Writing Conferences_ (1984) is an ERIC/NCTE publication. It offers a detailed discussion of HOCs and LOCs, and it gives several excellent examples of teacher/tutor-student interaction.

# HELPING STUDENTS MOVE FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE/EXPRESSIVE WRITING TO EXPOSITORY/ANALYTIC WRITING WRITE-NOW

Because helping our ABE/GED students move from personal experience/expressive writing to expository/analytic writing is an instructional objective that we share with every teacher of composition courses, we were interested in trying out some of Edward White's ideas in Chapter 13 of Teaching and Assessing Writing. White notes that most students do write better papers in personal and expressive modes than in expository or analytic modes. Wanting his students to have a feeling of accomplishment at the start of his composition courses, he normally begins by asking his students to write to the following assignment:

> Describe as clearly as you can a person you knew well when you were a child. Your object is to use enough detail so that we as readers can picture him or her clearly from the child's perspective and, at the same time, to make us understand from the tone of your description the way you felt about the person you describe.*

If this assignment works for Professor White, why not try it in our ABE/GED program? We were eager to see how much concrete detail our students would put into their descriptions, and we were curious about how they would convey feelings through their language choices.

We were also brave enough to write through the topic/assignment in order to get at the core or heart of the task. The selections which follow were written by two of our pre-GED students and one of us.

Student 1

The person I knew as a child was the woman who lived next door. She was a likable person and a great talker. When it got real hot, she would get out her hose and sprinkle water everywhere. Sometimes she let me sprinkle for her.

She used to send me to the store and give me a penny, which was a lot then. She also sent me over town to pay her bills for her. It made me happy to do it for her. My mother and I used to talk with her a lot. We had good times together.

Student 2

Willie, my brother, was the funniest child I ever saw. He was my baby brother and was the family pet when he was a little boy. My oldest brother gave Willie a dog for his birthday. He wouldn't let anyone touch that dog. The dog's name was Rang. Willie wouldn't go anywhere unless he could carry his dog.

One Sunday we went to church. Willie wouldn't walk along with us. He walked way back. When we got to church, they were singing and the dog started singing too. Everyone looked back to see what was going on. It was Rang. My mother took me and my brother out of the church - and Rang. You know the rest. Willie could not sit for a week.

WRITE-NOW Instructor(part of draft)

It's been over thirty years since I took tap dancing lessons from her. Her gentle, patient, refined voice is talking to me at this very moment, telling me to listen to the rhythm and look carefully at her example. She always spoke in that clear, soft manner, rarely anyway other than with enthusiastic tones and full of great expectations that I would master the steps and perform the entire routine at the next recital.

She usually wore black slacks and a short-sleeved white blouse, both appearing to fit comfortably, allowing her to demonstrate the dance steps and other routines which were a part of our lessons. She always moved gracefully and carefully, every action intended to help us understand the flow of single steps into a choreographic whole. I think we was slightly on the tall side, of medium build, and in her late thirties or early forties. Her hair was pulled around in back and anchored so that it did not distract as she instructed.

Miss H. quietly insisted on discipline. If we got the giggles or seemed to be having an off night, she would review the dance steps from the previous few weeks and lead us through the routine until we were able to advance to newsteps.

In neat, small printing she would write out the new steps on small pieces of paper - the kind that we could put in our shirt or pants pockets to use when we practiced at home. For each of the . . . .

*******

Were we pleased with our adaptation of Edward White's assignment? You bet we were! The two samples that we offered above were good, pleasant experiences for the students and the instructors. Both students started to use detail and build their descriptions around specific experiences. We began to see the lady next door and Willie. It was easy for us to talk with the two student writers because they had enjoyed the assignment and were able to appreciate the demands of such a transition piece and its place in their ABE/GED work.

And what about the instructor who wrote about his dancing teacher? Did he enjoy the assignment? How did he feel about writing through the topic and sharing his draft with his colleagues and students? I think you know the answers to those questions. The writing experience really made him think about what he should expect from his students, and it gave him an opportunity to write about some very dear memories from over thirty years ago. He had written about a teacher he never had a chance to praise adult-to-adult before she died.

The assignment works well in an ABE/GED setting. White goes on to describe how he develops an holistic scoring guide for the topic and how he gets his students to share and support their drafts with other students. ABE/GED practitioners should try to purchase White's book. We are very glad we have a copy for our teachers to use.

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*White, Edward M. Teaching and Assessing Writing. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1985, pp. 252-269.

From: GED Items, September 1986 - The Newsletter of the GED Testing Service.

# Holistic Scoring—Once More With Feeling

**For the past year or so, we've been telling everyone who would listen** (and more than a few who wouldn't!) everything we could about holistic scoring, the method that will be used to evaluate the essay section of the GED Writing Skills test beginning in 1988. Lately, what we've been hearing and reading about "our" method suggests that there are still some widespread misunderstandings.

The following is a list of a few major *misconceptions*.

"In holistic scoring, the errors don't count." Wrong. The errors *do* count, just like all other features of the writing. The correct way to state this is: "Raters don't count (enumerate) specific features as they evaluate a piece of writing, but they do absorb the effects of all of the features that go into making a piece of writing effective or ineffective."

"In holistic scoring, readers skim the papers." Wrong. The raters read the entire paper, word by word, in making their evaluations. The *process* of scoring the papers is swift because raters are not pausing to mark up or revise the papers, not because readers are racing through the task.

"In holistic scoring, the ideas are more important than the mechanics." Wrong. Holistic scoring does not isolate specific features of the writing. *Any* specific features. And content, ideas, organization, support, mechanics, *ad infinitum*, are all specific features of a piece of writing. Individual raters may place different importance on different features; as long as they rank the papers in the same place on the score scale, these differences are unimportant.

A useful place to begin understanding what holistic scoring is really all about is with Charles Cooper's definition in "Holistic Evluation of Writing," in *Evaluating Writing: Describing, Measuring, Judging*, published by the National Council of Teachers of English (1977).

> Holistic evaluation of writing is a guided procedure for sorting or ranking written pieces. The rater takes a piece of writing and either (1) matches it with another piece in a graded series of pieces or (2) scores it for the prominence of certain features important to that kind of writing or (3) assigns it a letter or number grade. The placing, scoring, or grading occurs quickly, impressionistically, after the rater has practiced the procedure with other raters. The rater does not make corrections or revisions in the paper. (p. 3)

Cooper goes on to identify several different types of holistic scoring procedures. Of them, the type most similar to the method to be used with the GED Writing Skills test is "general impression marking." According to Cooper, this method "is the simplest of the procedures in this overview of types of holistic evaluation. It requires no detailed discussion of features and no summing of scores given to separate features. The rater simply scores the paper by deciding where the paper fits within the range of papers produced for that assignment or occasion" (pp. 11-12).

The method used by GEDTS is a modification of general impression marking. The only difference is that the GEDTS method also involves a scoring guide, which serves to describe in general terms the characteristics of papers at different points on the scoring scale. The purpose of the scoring guide is not to alter the technique of holistic scoring, but rather to fix in place the standards that will be used to score the papers from year to year.

More thorough explanations of the system used to score the essay section of the GED Writing Skills Test can be found in GED Research Study No. 7, in *The 1988 Tests of General Educational Development: A Preview*, and in Vol. II, No. 4 of *GED Items*.

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# ANOTHER SOURCE FOR INFORMATION ON THE HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT OF GED ESSAYS

If, after studying our WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors and reading pp. 15 - 39 of The 1988 Tests of General Educational Development: A Preview, you still want to know more about the holistic assessment of writing samples, we suggest that you contact Dr. Robert Weiss at West Chester University(PA). He conducted a 310 project on the subject during 1986-87, PA 310 No. 98-7012.

You can also request his final report and "normed" samples from AdvancE.

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Edward M. White's book, Teaching and Assessing Writing (1985), is one of the best books that we have read on the general topic.

ON WRITING, READING, THINKING, AND LEARNING

. . . If I, as a writer, a reader, a thinker, a learner am open about my process, and show that I often ask myself, "Why?" then my students and I will inevitably become an active, breathing, learning community.

Learning can be a painful proposition. Teaching is empowering others to venture upon that lifelong journey. Red Smith says, "There's nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and open a vein." A funny thing about opening a vein: the color, texture and perception of lives are transformed in ways never believed possible. Learning and teaching affects lives and it's a risky proposition. When it isn't, I know I'm no longer teaching, just going through the motions.

From: "A Teacher Reflects" by
Marilyn Boutwell
in
Information Update,
April 1987.

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## CHAPTER 10

## FLOYD'S CHAPTER

From: Floyd's WRITE-Now Journal

5/4/87

I cand take better then I wright.
(I can talk better than I can write.)

I have not wright all that mutch
(I have not written all that much.)

I cand not spell all that good.
(I can't spell all that good.)

5/6/87

We are havening good tank today.
(We are having a good talk today.)

It is a good tool to larning.
(It is a good tool to learning.)

5/11/87

George and I have take About my rebmbering.
(George and I have talked about my remembering.)

And if I go over it the day. I do it.
(And if I go over it the same day, I do remember it.)

It is good.

5/20/87
My golds are to get. The GED so I may find a more effective prome.
(My goal is to get my GED so I can find a more effective program for me.)

5/27/87 - writing in response to a reading assignment

The way they are trayed. Is not fare.
I have the falt some. Of the flocing to.
Do to my op.
(The way they are treated is not fair. I have had some of the same feelings due to my c p.)

For the first few months of his studies at Project A.B.E., Floyd worked on improving his basic math skills and read from several adult reading/comprehension skills books. He was very reluctant to write. Shortly after he wrote about his handicapping condition, cerebral palsy , he and I talked about what it's like to have cerebral palsy. We also talked about his GED goal and his hopes for the future. He is now writing to examine his thoughts and improve his study skills. He and I have no doubts about his ability to progress,and he knows that he won't be ready for the GED tests until the new tests (1988+) are being administered.

Because he had seen other students working on their writing skills, he wanted to know more about the new GED tests. I decided to see what he could do with a choice of essay topics. Floyed spent several minutes reading silently through a list of fourteen essay topics and prompts. He picked two topics for some reflection and zero draft considerations. One topic asked him to write about how he felt about accepting limitations as an adult, and the second topic asked him to advance arguments about what good he saw in television.

He surprised me by opting to write about the benefits of watching television. His first essay draft consisted of two sentences. After I encouraged him to take another look at the topic and prompt, he wrote two more sentences. I suggested that he take the essay topics home and study them for an unofficial assignment. He agreed to do so, and then we went back to his math exercises. Having observed his efforts to write, I knew that he had to expend a great amount of mental and physical energy to get a few sentences on paper. I also knew that it was the right time to challenge him, to see what he could do now that he was comfortable with me and willing to take some risks.

* * * * * * * * *

Floyd's Second Draft (after getting some spelling and punctuation help)

### The Good I See in TV

I watch a lot of news, more area and local than national. I think that can be of great benefit to me as an individual. It can be of help to me in society some day.

I hope to help the handicapped. I think Channel _ is better than Channel _ in PA. I like ______ in _____ best of all

* * * * * * * * * * *

After he read his second draft aloud to me, I asked him to talk about the sentence that seemed to be out of place - I hope to help the handicapped. Our short conference lead to Floyd's taking about an hour to write the next piece.

### TV and Me - Helping the Handicapped

I hope this sums up my two essays. The two PBS television stations have very excellent shows. like Sesame Street with Big Bird along with Mr. Rogers. They are educational for school age and pre-school kids. Which are good for homebound people. It (television) is a good teacher.

The movie I saw on Henry Ford was what they call syndicated for network television. From the founding of the company till Henry Ford II was put in charge in 1941.

When I have the GED I will help the handicapped in the York community, Whether this is at ______ or not, it will help to know newspeople.

* * * * * * * * *

Floyd's efforts to summarize his previous writing on the television topic had uncovered what he really wanted to talk and write about - his desire to become an advocate for other handicapped persons. It didn't take long for us to agree that he had discovered his own writing project. When he returned the following week for the first of his two weekly visits to our ABE program site, he was eager to have me read and comment on his first draft dealing with the advocacy topic.

* * * * * * * * *

### Advocate

I would like to be an advocate for handicapped people because of my c p.

I would have to convince people of the need for the advocate program and its benefits for people like me. I am going to speak with ______ today to talk about what might be involved.

I think the program needs national, state, and community legislation. I know my representatives, _______ and _______. My dad was a committeeman and my brother Mike is now one. I would speak to them about legislation for the advocate for the handicapped program as well as the agencies for the handicapped people.

I see my role as a salesman for the program as the first priority.

* * * * * * * * *

Readers of this manual on the teaching of writing in ABE/GED programs should understand that the author of the short essay draft above had probably never before been asked to write any kind of sustained prose. Floyd, who is now 37, hadn't been in school for twenty years. When he was last in school, he was apparently not expected to function academically at quite as high a level as this early writing indicates he can function. During a short conference with Floyd, I asked him questions such as: Can you tell me more about your ideas for an advocacy program? Can you define your terms? Did you explain c p to your readers? Where will the funding be obtained? How do you plan to sell your ideas? Why you? What qualities do you possess that would make you an effective advocate for handicapped persons?

In response to our conference, he continued to think and write through all of the questions which he will need to answer before he can take his dream beyond our ABE program. He asked me to look at the steps that he had now described.

* * * * * * * *

## Steps Toward My Goal

First I have to speak with the agencies for the handicapped. I have to speak about my desire to develop a program of advocacy for the handicapped. I will develop my advocacy role within the agencies themselves.

Second, I have to explore money sources for the program and sell them to the local, state, and national government agencies involved. I will need to develop funding. I think my state, local and national governments will be of help. About ten to twenty million would be nice (Floyd was injecting some humor here).

Third is working with the handicapped people in the agencies' programs. It will be my best quality. I hope I will be able to communicate on all levels.

* * * * * * * *

In replying to my continued questioning about "my best quality," Floyd returned the following week with these additions to his very real and very important writing project:

During my seven years as a client at the ______ I have had four program managers and four forepersons. I think I have learned a lot by being observant of staff and clients. I will be asking more questions of both clients and staff. I think my observations of people are good. I will ask _____ to be my first "case." She is at ______ and ______.

* * * * * * * *

## Now is the Time for Lower Order Concerns

Because Floyd has now generated enough material on his writing project, what we have come to call his "concept paper," he is ready to start learning about such surface concerns as punctuation and spelling. Remember his first journal entry?

We decided to work on improving his spelling. I typed out a short list to get him started.

### Floyd's Spelling Demons

education

value

learn

benefit, beneficial

advocate

handicapped

people

which teacher

teacher

community

whether

great

national

better

some, sum

think

When he misspells one of the words on his personal spelling list, I remind him to check it and correct it. We are confident that his spelling will continue to improve.

An interesting punctuation problem that Floyd is still trying to solve is a tendency to use too many periods, some for no logical reason. He is also starting to understand comma usage. He knows how to use question marks. We are working on this problem by examining his writing, noting the need for punctuation or the need to eliminate the punctuation he has used, and then giving him a chance to figure it out without my help. When I think he needs more help, I turn to a traditional English language arts or GED preparation text. Don't throw any of the "old" pre-GED and GED texts and workbooks away. Use them as we do with Floyd and many other students to supplement their learning directly from their own writing.

It is important for us to remind our readers that we don't work with Floyd in isolation. He is one of several ABE students who might be studying at our York site during the morning hours. While Floyd is writing, for example, I might be helping Clair with his math studies and Mary with her science test preparation. Unless there is some good reason why all of our students should not be working on their writing skills as part of their balanced basic skills diet at Project A.B.E., most of them will also do some writing every day. Some will make dialogue entries, some will write in their WRITE-Now Journals, and some will work on Write-for-Life projects. It is also important to understand that our students aren't required to work on their writing skills. Just as their teachers don't always feel in the WRITE mood, so also do our students have I-don't-want-to-write days.

A few weeks before Floyd found his real-life topic, Clair asked me if he had to do some writing. Because Clair was under pressure to get his GED soon, I told him that, yes, I'd like to see him do some writing, but that decision would be up to him. If he wanted to write journal entries, etc., he should let me know.

Clair, knowing that I was really urging him to work on his writing skills, said, "In other words, you want me to do some more writing."

Floyd, who had been following this exchange, chuckled, and then catching Clair's eye, said, "That's the impression I've been getting."

Just before the fiscal year ended, Floyd gave us a big compliment when he wrote this journal entry:

"George, I think you and the other WRITE-Now teachers are doing well on the project. I know it is helping me to bring out things I've had inside me for years. I have enjoyed the writing. I know it will benefit me in the future. I would like to read the manual."

Thanks, Floyd. We needed that.

We wanted to write about Floyd because he is a handicapped student who, until recently, never had much encouragement to improve his basic academic skills. Now he is writing about and thinking about his next step, a move toward a more productive role in society. For many years others have been caring for Floyd; now he wants to help care for others. He has a long way to go, but he has taken some big steps forward, with and without his crutches.

# CHAPTER 11 - PUBLISHING STUDENT WRITING

## WHY PUBLISH ABE/GED STUDENT WRITING?

Back in 1980-81, when we put together a local ABE program newsletter called "The Honest A.B.E.," we really started to see why the struggle to get our ABE/GED/ESL students to write for some kind of publication needed to be more than just an occasional expenditure of staff energies. We felt that writing practice and writing-related activities should be a regular and significant part of what our students and we did in our classrooms, especially in our individualized ABE settings. In our 1983-84 310 project, The L.I.U.'s Write-for-Life Program, we advanced several arguments in support of helping our students to write for audiences other than themselves and their instructors, and in our 1984-85 310 project, "Publishing an Anthology of Adult Student Writing," we worked toward a dream. Now, as we look back and ahead in 1987, we know that publishing student writing will remain an important goal for our WRITE-Now team.

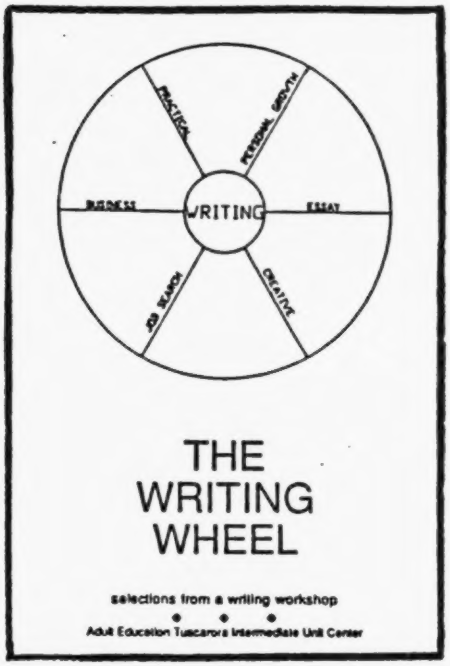
## SOME REASONS FOR SUPPORTING THE WRITE CAUSES

- The published writing of students is often easy for other students to read and usually more interesting than most other reading materials.
- Writing projects encourage adult student readers to try writing.
- Writing projects/classroom writing activities can motivate students to share their cultures, feelings, and ideas.
- A publishing activity might be the first opportunity most students have had to see their work in print. It can be a boost to their self-esteem and a key factor in motivating them to persevere.
- Student writing often gives staff new insights into student potential, interests, and attitudes.
- Writing activities can promote better teaching and better student-teacher relationships.

- Publication activities such as success and inspiration stories can be good tools in the recruiting process.
- Process-to-product writing activities can give students a feeling of participation and help them to be proud of their achievements and their school.
- Exposures to other cultures and life experiences can lead to friendships.
- A successful publication experience might provide a student with the motivation to continue and complete an educational program.
- A publication project can help adult educators publicize their work and their contribution to the community at large.
- Publications which consist mainly of student writing can be a kind of "report card that provides students with a form of recognition for their work and their progress in learning to write....a kind of public commitment"(Tana Reiff).
- Student publications are a positive statement that adult education programs are not conducted in a vacuum but are related directly to students' personal, family, and occupational goals.
- The instructor who publishes student writing says that she values both the writing and the writer.
- Published writing has a real audience beyond the teacher. Students gain a sense of themselves as real writers.
- Peer groups assume increased importance as students engaged in publishing projects read each others' writing. As students interact with each other, they move toward a common goal of publication, reinforcing and contributing to each others' success.

## CHECK OUT THIS 310 PROJECT IN SUPPORT OF THE WRITE CAUSES

**The WRITE-Now team hopes you will have a chance to check out 1986-87 310 Project 98-7022. It was conducted by our colleagues from Pennsylvania's Tuscarora Intermediate Unit.**



THE WRITING WHEEL

selections from a writing workshop

• • •

Adult Education Tuscarora Intermediate Unit Center

### "THE WRITING WHEEL"

Our Writing Wheel booklet of student writings was a pleasure to put together. We passed around quite a few copies and received many favorable comments. Writers! Keep It Up!

"Thank you for sharing with me the copy of The Writing Wheel , and thank you for great efforts to improve our society through adult education. I greatly enjoyed the selected writings, and I look forward to reading more in the future."
J. Doyle Corman, Senator

"Thank you for the advanced copy of The Writing Wheel , the product of your current Section 310 Project. The book is impressive and I am sure that the project itself will be of interest to ABE teachers statewide."
John Christopher, Chief of Adult Education PDE

"It's a great book. Well-written and packed full of honest emotions."
Gary Gill, Employment Counselor, Lewistown Job Service

"Having received and read most of The Writing Wheel selections, my colleagues and I would like to thank you for thinking of us. We congratulate you, your colleagues, and your students for your good work." George E. Rutledge, Coordinator, Project ABE, York

"Thank you so much for the nice note and the copy of The Writing Wheel booklet. I thoroughly enjoyed it and was pleased to be included in it." Judy Headings, Writing Workshop Participant

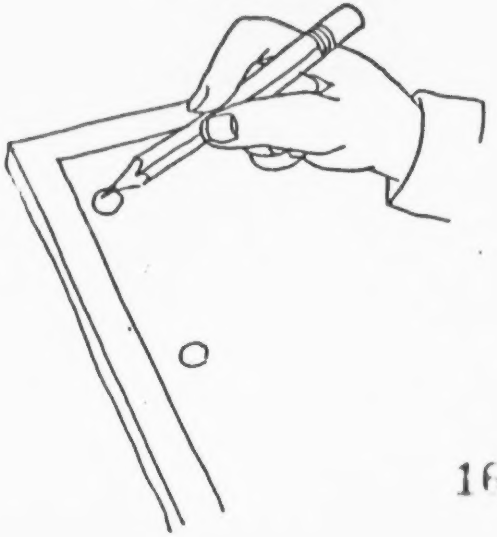
A SELECTION FROM THE WRITING WHEEL

## STAYING ONE STEP AHEAD

Today's Writing Workshop stirred some emotions that were uncomfortable. Why? I'm not sure. I do enjoy the class; the people and the assignments are stimulating. Perhaps, I'm trying to wear a hat (role) that doesn't belong to me. Perhaps, I'm overly concerned that these individuals I share with will give up. The lady that was so excited about her writing, her discovery; I had those feelings 10 years ago and through her, I'm vicariously living those feelings again. The other lady, the daughter, finishing her GED; I was enthralled with her 10 minute account. All the sounds and activity that distracted her, but nevertheless she continued writing. The clarity of what she sensed around her, the descriptions - most impressive! And then the mother, finishing her GED, her frustration. I know what that feels like, and I also know if she hangs in there, at some point she will look back on this experience with such relish. She has it made and doesn't realize it.

Time gets in our way. We put a time limit on everything. We compare ourselves to others and miss the greatest competition of all. Competition with self. Does it really matter where we are in life? No, I don't think so as long as we as individuals are one step ahead of where we were last year.

DEBORAH C. SAUERS



Please turn the manual so that you can read this wonderful piece from The Writing Wheel.

## ANOTHER WAY TO PUBLISH STUDENT WRITING: A SAMPLE FROM THE TUSCARORA I.U.

### RE-ENTRY

By Connie Bishop

I came, thirsting for knowledge, and you
let me in.
I came, unsure of where I was going, but
knowing where I'd been,
I came, nervous and unsure, afraid, not
knowing where to begin.
I gave my journal, my innerself, you
read it, but did not condemn.
I met a lot of good people, unsure of
themselves like me.
We all have shared a lot, set goals, and
with ourselves made peace.
The re-entry program, a good place to be.
It taught us how to face facts, and deal
with ourselves and reality.

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FROM: Never Too Late News, The GED Alumni Association Newsletter of the Adult Education T.I.U. Center

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We selected "Re-entry," an inspiring short piece by a participant in the T.I.U.'s Project Re-entry, because we feel that prose poems and other kinds of creative writing should be encouraged by ABE/GED instructors and counselors.

> I gave my journal, my innerself, you
> read it, but did not condemn.

## ANOTHER WRITE-NOW PUBLISHING OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL
(from a local Sunday paper)

F2 — THE SUNDAY NEWS, July 5, 1987

# A salute to the American way

**By Joseph C. Wilt**
**Special to Sunday News**

As a young man I recall with fond memories the thrill I experienced when a military band marched by in a parade. The clashing of cymbals and the beat of the drums sent my blood pulsating. And then I saw Old Glory — the American flag flying so proudly.

The sight of the flag together with the majestic music of the military band caused "goose pimples" to appear on my arms and the lump in my throat convinced me that this was patriotism in action. I was truly proud to be an American.

For some of us its been a long time since we experienced "goose pimples" and a lump in our throat. Why? What has changed? Have "the passing years,' the Watergate capers, the disillusionment of politicians "turned sour" taken their toll? Could be.

I think about today's youth. Have they tasted patriotism? Have they experienced the "goose pimples", and the lump in the throat? In our schools, are they exposed to the ingredients that give birth to patriotism? I really don't know.

I recall the Memorial Day service at Cape May, N.J. that I witnessed a few years ago. The United States Coast Guard stationed at Cape May presented a memorial service in Convention Hall, followed by outdoor ceremonies on the boardwalk. The Coast Guard detachment was resplendent in their uniforms and music by the Coast Guard band was awe inspiring indeed.

Following the volleys of rifle fire and the playing of Taps, a small boat filled wih flowers was towed out to sea. Then a Coast Guard helicopter dropped a large wreath into the bounding waves. As the wreath and the flower filled boat drifted out to sea pangs of sorrow filled my heart.

Once again I felt "goose pimples" and a lump in my throat. Even now my eyes are filled with tears as I relive those precious moments.

A few years ago when residing in the Park Village area of York, I had a stimulating experience. Being an early riser, I was taking a walk shortly after daybreak. All was quiet except for the chattering of the birds. I walked past a large American flag situated on a corner property. Waving in the early morning breeze it presented a, beautiful picture.

I saluted the flag as I walked by. It brought back memories of my service of 34 months in the United States Army. Following my saluting the flag I wondered whether anyone was watching Me. I was somewhat embarrassed. Then when I realized all the good things that the flag represented, all qualms about saluting the flag left me. Then it was quite easy for me to pay my respect to the flag — the symbol of a nation that under God has become and will always remain a great nation.

I asked myself the other day the reason for my sudden interest in patriotism. Then it struck me. I recalled my attendance a few years ago at the July 4 celebration at the York fairgrounds. What a thrilling experience. The grandstand was packed to capacity. Singing "God Bless America," "The Marine Hymn" and the U.S. Air Force song revived within me something that had been dormant for years. My patriotism was revived — reborn — rekindled — and it was a good feeling.

I pondered about the quotation of Lord Byron who stated "He who loves not his country, can love nothing."

And I thought, too, concerning William Shakespeare's comment "Who is here so vile that will not love his country."

There you have it. My patriotism was revived — and what a glorious feeling it was. I was proud indeed to be an American — including "goose pimples" and a lump in my throat.

*Joseph C. Wilt is a frequent contributor to the "I Know A Story" feature.*

## Do you know a story?

Here's your chance to become a published author. The York Sunday News will accept contributions of stories for the "I Know A Story" feature. Your story should be typewritten. It can be about a dedicated teacher, a terrific relative or friend, who has made an impact on your life, an incident (humorous or tragic) in which you were involved which also might be of interest to readers of this newspaper, or just about anything relating to the human condition.

Send your story to:
I Know A Story Editor
c/o Sunday News
205 N. George St.
P.O. Box 1961
York, PA., 17405

For the "About the Author" notes, please write something about yourself - family, hobbies, schools, community and church activities, where you work and what you do, and so forth.

Include your telephone number and address and the best time of day to call you. Please include a recent, clear picture of yourself if you have one.

# State of the Art—On Passing Notes

by Bill King

"You want us to do what we used to get into trouble doing in school—passing notes back and forth." The comment came during what I regard as a "breakthrough" session in my writing class. It was one of those days when the students, when all of us, really got going and seemed to make permanent progress. Not that this was so obvious from the quality of writing; it had more to do with confidence, self-perception, and mutual trust. The spelling was just as bad, but the writing began to flow.

I started by asking the students to put down one word describing how they felt about being in class that day. Then I asked them to make a sentence with that word. As each one finished, I took the paper, wrote a response, and handed the paper back. We kept going back and forth.

At first I wasn't sure I could keep up. I was glad for once that only four of the seven students had shown up that day. I tried to ask leading questions. I tried to get at feelings. At first the responses were disappointingly stiff, wooden, lacking in energy.

Student: "Good." "It's good to be in school because you can learn something."

Me: "Are you learning anything? What are you learning?"

"Yes, I am learning, learning to read and how to spell."

"What about writing? Why is spelling so important?"

"Yes, I am learning to write too. I would like to have pretty handwriting. Misspelled words can be very bad for someone else to read."

I began to wonder if we should stop the exercise and retreat to the safety of a spelling test. But then I noticed that one of the four dialogues had acquired a life of its own. I didn't want to stop because I wanted to know what Angelica was going to tell me. It wasn't just a writing exercise. I wanted to hear her story.

Student: "Happy." "I feel happy about coming to school."

Me: "Why do you feel happy? I don't feel so happy. What's there to feel happy about?"

"I feel happy because I'm living."

"I'm happy most of the time, but not always. My ex-wife called this morning, so I was happy and sad at the same time. Does this ever happen to you?"

"Yes, it does. I can be happy for a couple hours, then I turn sad for the rest of the day. If somebody get on my bad side I get very upset."

"Tell me about the last person who got on your bad side. What happened?"

"Well, this person is my sister. I wa watching her daughter for her unt she come home from work. When sh come home, she ask me to watch he until she went to the shoppin [illegible] al Her daughter is a brat and bad an she won't mind anyone . . ."

The dialogue in writing went on fc more than an hour. At the end, som of them read portions out loud. Ther were lots of comments and laugh: The written dialogues launched th class into a verbal free-for-all. Finall I had to quiet them down and sen them out for a break, despite the fac that I had been laughing and shout ing as much as anyone.

The last half hour was pretty chac tic. I wasn't sure they had learne anything. It wasn't until a few day later, and finally until two or thre classes, that I had realized what ha happened—and what I had learned

I learned that the more I am willin to put out, the more they will put ou To the extent that I present myself a a whole person—a person with fee ings, problems with the ex-wife, up and downs—they will respond wit the same honesty and energy. [illegible] ar just a "teacher," they will be just "stu dents," a role in which they've pre viously experienced failure.

I learned how I can be a model fo them of what it's like to be someon who writes, a person for whom wri ing is a means of self-expression an communication, not just something teacher makes you do so he can fin your mistakes.

We're still passing notes back an forth. Only now, five months later, th notes are often two or three page long (continued as homework). Th pages are divided into paragraph: There is a modicum of organization The handwriting is better. And yes even the spelling is slowly improvin Most of all, the students don't hes tate a minute to write what the think. The energy level is high an class is never dull.

*Reprinted from the Ladder, (Vo XIV, March-April 1986) the N [illegible] le ter of Push Literacy Acton Now.*

ABE NEWSLETTER

This is exciting stuff! We are always pleased to receive and share such encouraging WRITE-Now news from our ABE/GED colleagues.

Bill King's article is a reprint of a reprint fromThe LADDER, PLAN, Inc. It was reprinted in the Nov./Dec. issue of the VA Dept. of Education's ABE Newsletter, 1986.

If you think about writing as Paul Goodman thought about it - - as a way of being in the world - - then the most fully realized way of being in the world would come from a person who has the flexibility to write for different human situations, different social situations, different personal situations. And that I guess is what really makes me feel so intensely about a world of discourse that's narrowed to the academic function, as if that were the only reason for which people write. In fact, it is a small segment of the universe of discourse and therefore a small aspect of the way people can be in the world.

Carl Klaus in
Papers on Research About
Learning - Better Testing,
Better Writing, 1981.

## A WRITE-Now Invitation: Making Connections

Because we wanted to encourage our students to read and then write about what they had just read, we decided to prepare a general reading folder. In that folder we put newspaper articles, pamphlets, and other publications we thought might appeal to adult readers at all levels of academic achievement. The most popular item proved to be Charles Herrings's "Mind-Over-Money" issue (1986) of The Adult Learner, a magazine published four times a year by The Adult Learning Association.*

We glued the invitation which appears below on the front of the folder and waited for students to comment orally or in writing.

Project A.B.E.

General Reading Materials

Dear Students,

From time to time, as we read and study books, magazines and newspapers, we will place articles of general interest in this folder. You are encouraged to check it each time you feel the need for a break or a change of pace from your studies. We hope you will read and comment on the articles and other things we put in this folder.

Please return items to folder.

On p. 14 of Herring's innovative and inspiring magazine, he tells us that we can learn to notice what our minds are doing by setting aside time to do this. We must take time to learn how to use our brains. "To learn to notice the mind's activity, stop reading for five minutes and look out the window. Don't do anything except notice the words that go through your mind. At the end of five minutes, write down a few of the things you thought about."

Herring goes on to tell us that the words which go through our minds at about a thousand words a minute are called self-talk, "because they're words produced by your mind that only you can 'hear.'"

Is this self-talk negative, positive, or just keeping us in a neutral or passive mood? If we work at becoming more aware of our self-talk, we can start to take charge of at least a few moments in our lives. We can get better at noticing our minds.

One of our most successful WRITE-Now activities in terms of our students' willingness to write on a daily or weekly basis is freewriting. Herring reviews the process of freewriting by telling us to relax and spend a few minutes writing everything that goes through our minds while we are thinking about something that is important to us at the moment. We might write about a personal problem or a mental block we seem to be encountering at work. Freewriting is almost always private writing unless we want to share it with others. We don't have to worry about spelling or sentence structure. We just need to notice our thoughts.

Herring's main point, "the secret to being a successful money-maker, or a successful student or a successful anything," is that we can control the images our minds create, and the images we create determine our feelings and actions. The secret is out! If we want to be successful, we had better make sure that our self-talk is helping us step toward goals that we want to achieve.

Now we know how to explain what we have always felt was a very worthwhile writing topic: Tell us,why do you want to improve your basic academic skills and/or get your GED? By having our students share some of their personal goals and feelings with us, we have generally been able to make more employment-oriented and self-esteem-oriented kinds of connections. The writing activity helps us to be more effective adult educators.

A second article in "Mind Over Money" which lead to some provocative responses from our ABE/GED students was entitled"How to Strengthen the Mind." When we write, when we put our thinking on paper, we are exercising our minds. This process can help us to discover new thoughts and to use them in the future. If we don't judge the value of the ideas as we are writing and don't worry about spelling and grammar, we might be surprised at what new things come out.

When one of our students read this article, he expressed great delight in sharing with us some recent self-discoveries that writing at home and in our program had prompted. He quoted from the article (p. 43) when he read, "People who write down ideas get good at expressing ideas. People who are good at expressing ideas are the first ones promoted on the job. The higher-up the employment ladder you move, the more important writing will become." Had we not interrupted, he would probably have read the entire article to us. He now writes regularly to get at his thoughts--to strengthen his mind.

A third writing activity supported by The Adult Learner deals with discovering or getting down our personal goals. We are never surprised when, upon counseling new students, we are told that they aren't sure what their goals are. If students have goals which they can discuss, it is a rare student who can express his or her priorities concerning the achievement of those goals. Herring notes that "on the average, people spend more time planning a party than planning their life." Now, dear readers, fellow ABE/GED instructors, that is a frightening thought!

Just as we ask students to take a few minutes from time to time to write down their goals, so do we often jot down a few notes right along with them. Later, if the student seems headed in too many directions or going nowhere at all, we can review the writing and sharing of the student's goals. This usually works to keep us all on a positive, goal-oriented path connected with the student's long-term hopes and dreams.

Note: If you would like to learn more about the publications of The Adult Learning Association, write to Charles Herring at P. O. Box 145, Withrow, WA 98858.

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*Permission to reprint extended passages authorized by The Adult Learning Association, HCR 81, G St. NW, Waterville, WA 98858.

## HOW ABOUT KEEPING A GINGER BOOK?

Several years ago, when I was serving as coordinator of the Lincoln I.U.'s Writing Project in cooperation with Penn State/ Capitol Campus, my office support person, Ginger, gave me a gift which I have used many times in the WRITE direction. She gave me a manuscript book, an attractively bound book of about one hundred empty pages for me to fill with whatever I wanted to copy or compose. Most of my entries have been selections from books and articles dealing with the teaching of writing at all levels. I am very particular about what I write or copy in my Ginger Book.

### Sample Entry

> We believe that as writers sustain writing and reflect on it, they become more desirous of creating a positive impression. That desire, a sense of investment in producing something worth reading, helps give clarity to purpose, causes one to be considerate of an audience, and helps shape the form. . . . it also establishes a purpose for using effective signals to the reader - punctuation, spelling, and other writing conventions which do not impair the reading.

Alan M. McLeod & Patricia H. Duncan in "Improving Student Writing," The Clearing House for the Contemporary Educator in Middle and Secondary Schools, January of 1982.

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The practice of keeping such a manuscript book handy for copying and composing has been a valuable one for me. I have often used entries for inspiration and for on-target quotations during workshop presentations. When I shared some entries with a recent GED class, I was delighted to learn that two of my students also kept similar collections of favorite poems and prose passages.

## Write-for-Life Examples From Our ABE/GED Students

We asked our students to give us some Write-for-Life examples. Here are just a few of their statements.

I write letters and notes to those I love very much.

I write to friends in other states.

I write to friends and family that I don't get to see.

I write notes and excuses to my children's teachers.

I have to do job reviews and complete other paperwork involved with being a supervisor.

I write up food orders and bills to send to customers.

I write supply lists for the kitchen staff, bar help, and maintenance workers.

I need to fill out time sheets.

I have to make out work sheets each day.

I have to describe needed repairs and parts to be replaced.

I write up orders for parts in stock.

I work on ad lay-outs for an advertising agency.

I have to file(write) monthly production reports.

I write songs and poems for pleasure.

I write just to write.

I take notes for the dog club I belong to.

I have to make up stickers for the boards at work.

I need to figure out the tonnage for the day and record it.

I like to collect and copy quotations from newspapers and magazines.

I write reports for committees and file grievances.

I must write orders and sales quotations.

I correspond regularly as secretary of the board of directors at my son's nursery school.

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A class discussion could lead to similar lists from your students.

## SOME WRITE-FOR-LIFE OCCASIONS FOR ALL

. . . many semi-literates in the United States have said in interviews that they attended school through high school, but they never felt that reading and writing had anything to do with them and their interests and concerns. They felt as if they were on the outside looking in on an experience that must be relevant for others, but not for them; they never claimed reading and writing as part of their lives. *

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After a student is into a stable routine in any of our ABE programs, we encourage him or her to begin a Write-for-Life project by working on something that will connect with the student's life. We try to give the student a wide range of rhetorical occasions. Here are just a few examples.

Letters

- inquiry
- explanation
- complaint
- reminder
- resume
- resignation

Short Forms

- slogan
- poster
- telephone memo
- shopping list
- introduction
- buy-sell ads

How To's

- recipe
- instructions
- directions
- rules
- will

Narratives and Other Forms

- minutes of meeting
- news release

Narratives(cont.

- prayer
- sketch
- prose poem
- summary
- public statement

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*From: Staton, Jana, Joy Kreeft Peyton, and Shelley Gutstein, eds."Dialogue Journals for Developing Literacy in Refugee, Migrant, and Adult Basic Education," Dialogue, September 1986.

A WRITE-FOR-LIFE APPLICATION

We were pleased to share this article with the staff of TABLET, Tennessee's Adult Basic Education Newsletter. It appeared in the November 1986 issue.

# To Write or Not To Write?: A Quality of Life Question

### Write for Your Rights

*by Ann Skilton*
*Write-for-Life Associate, I.U. 12*

You take your suit to the cleaners, only to have it returned looking worse than when you took it in. The interfacing on one of the lapels has shrunk; the result is a very wrinkled lapel.

Or, you launder your son's winter jacket, only to have the inner lining separate and mat. In some places, the jacket has virtually no inner lining. In other places, the inner lining is clumped together in a ball. Its appearance is awful, and its weather resistance is limited.

What do you do? You write a letter to the manufacturer. If you explain the problem well, you may be rewarded with restitution by the company.

How do you get the company's address? First, you go to the store where you purchased the now-defective merchandise. If you explain the problem to them, they will furnish the necessary mailing information.

What do you say? You simply state what the problem is with the merchandise in question. Be sure to mention when and where you purchased the garment. If you still have it, you should also include your original receipt. It is not necessary nor advisable to be angry. That will not help. You want to create a certain impression in the company's mind. You want them to believe that you are a valued customer who is upset with merchandise they manufactured. If they wish to keep you as a customer, they can respond with an act of good will. However, if you are angry, the manufacturer may consider you a crank or a complainer. They may feel that the issue is closed and not try to restore relations. Ask yourself, "What do I want, restitution or a chance to vent my anger?"

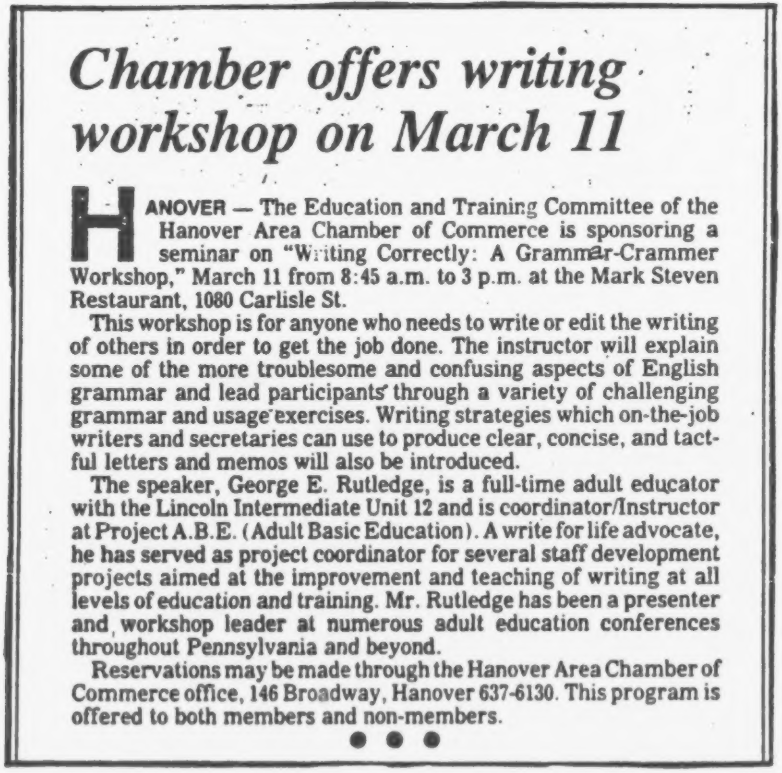
Other instances where you may write for your rights include cleaning up parking tickets, problems with insurance claims, or contract agreements. Many times these problems can be solved without legal help. A simple, clearly-written, detailed letter may be all that is needed.

Sometimes, the ability to write a clear sentence or two can avoid a problem. On a recent trip to a nearby city, I parked at a meter which was defective. I wrote, "This meter is broken," on a piece of paper and placed the note under my windshield wiper. When I returned hours later, I noticed other cars in the area had been ticketed. My car was not.

When you feel that you have not been or might not be treated fairly in a given situation - stop and think. Who might have the power to correct this situation? Once you have identified the source, write a letter. Make sure your letter is courteous, complete in detail, and concise. Keep copies of all the correspondence. You may need to write again, either to the same source or to another higher source. If you have kept copies, you will know exactly what you said and when you said it.

Why bother? What have you got to lose? You are already unhappy with your present situation. It can either stay the same or imnprove through your efforts. While not every "rights" type letter will net you fair restitution, many will. In the past, I have received new replacement merchandise, coupons for new merchandise, and letters of apology. In some cases I have also been ignored. But in every case, I have always had the satisfaction of knowing that I tried. **TABLET**

## A WRITE-NOW Public Service Opportunity



### *Chamber offers writing workshop on March 11*

HANOVER — The Education and Training Committee of the Hanover Area Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring a seminar on "Writing Correctly: A Grammar-Crammer Workshop," March 11 from 8:45 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Mark Steven Restaurant, 1080 Carlisle St.

This workshop is for anyone who needs to write or edit the writing of others in order to get the job done. The instructor will explain some of the more troublesome and confusing aspects of English grammar and lead participants through a variety of challenging grammar and usage exercises. Writing strategies which on-the-job writers and secretaries can use to produce clear, concise, and tactful letters and memos will also be introduced.

The speaker, George E. Rutledge, is a full-time adult educator with the Lincoln Intermediate Unit 12 and is coordinator/Instructor at Project A.B.E. (Adult Basic Education). A write for life advocate, he has served as project coordinator for several staff development projects aimed at the improvement and teaching of writing at all levels of education and training. Mr. Rutledge has been a presenter and workshop leader at numerous adult education conferences throughout Pennsylvania and beyond.

Reservations may be made through the Hanover Area Chamber of Commerce office, 146 Broadway, Hanover 637-6130. This program is offered to both members and non-members.

● ● ●

Although George had given several presentations to K-college educators, including ABE/GED practitioners, he was anxious about leading a seminar of business and industry representatives. How, he wondered, would the public sector respond to WRITE-Now process illustrations? Would they demand a very traditional approach to writing on the job, an approach similar to what they remembered from their secondary school and college days? Would they accept what he planned to illustrate?

To his delight and great relief, the seminar participants enjoyed the introduction to the writing process that George used to focus on business writing needs. They commented on their writing habits and were pleased to hear that others had similar writing problems.

George took the opportunity to introduce the participants to the GED Writing Skills Test, especially to the new essay requirement, and he urged the participants to help recruit ABE/GED/ESL students for the local adult education programs. The participants agreed that they will need better readers and writers among their entry-level employees in the future. They were encouraged by the changes in the GED tests for the WRITE reasons.

George gave this workshop presentation as a public service offering on behalf of the Lincoln Intermediate Unit. He received no pay, but he returned to his ABE/GED teaching responsibilities with even more enthusiasm for the WRITE cause. He learned that employers do value employees with good writing and reading skills.

*******

In support of George's public service presentation on writing, the publisher of Writer's Digest, F & W Publications, Inc., gave him special permission to use several editions of "Grammar Grappler" as his primary text during the workshop. He clipped the grappler exercises from dozens of his personal copies of Writer's Digest and put them in a folder according to the grammar, punctuation, or syntactical problem area illustrated by each grappler article. It wasn't hard to organize the exercises to match the table of contents of one of the new GED Writing Skills Test preparation texts.

Published monthly, Writer's Digest is available at subscription rates of $21 for one year, $39 for two years, and $55 for three years. Order from Writer's Digest, 205 W. Center St., Marion, Ohio 43305.

## WRITING CAN BE GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH

During our WRITE-Now preparation for the dialogue journal phase of the project, we became subscribers to Dialogue, a newsletter that we recommend in the chapter on the WRITE-Now Journal process. We liked the articles and research descriptions so much that we continued to read and discuss Dialogue through our second semester. The good news that we offer below is based on an article from the April 1987 issue, "Related Research: The Effects of Writing on Health."

James Pennebaker, a psychologist at Southern Methodist University, has been conducting a fascinating series of studies on the effects of writing about distressing life experiences on the body's immune function and general psychological health. In a 1987 APA presentation, Pennebaker and his colleagues described how they examined the efficacy of writing about traumatic experiences by having fifty healthy undergraduates randomly assigned to write either about personal traumatic events, or trivial topics for 20 minutes on each of five consecutive days, in a personal (non-dialogue)journal.

A number of measures of healthy functioning were taken before, immediately afterward, and at six weeks after the study. Autonomic activity(blood pressure, heart rate, etc.)was also measured each day during the study. Pennebaker reported that writing down concerns and feelings led to positive results on the immune function tests, health center use, autonomic levels, and subjective distress. Those who were asked to discuss only trivial pursuits got no benefits, and this difference held up after six weeks -- the writers had made fewer doctor visits.

In a related study, Pennebaker and Beall found that writing about both emotions and facts surrounding a traumatic event was even more beneficial than an "emotions only" approach. Pennebaker cautions that the writers instructed to write about traumatic events were initially more distressed than those assigned to the trivial condition, but that long-term followup measures all favored the writing as a therapy approach.

As opposed to the private, non-interactive nature of the "writing therapy" just described, dialogue journals, when used appropriately, can provide some of the benefits of feedback and counsel. Those of us ABE/GED practitioners who find that we are doing counseling in dialogue journals even when that wasn't the initial intent are probably doing more good then we realize.

Look for articles about the therapeutic and psychosomatic benefits of written communication in future issues of Dialogue.

---

The Studies:

Pennebaker, J.W., Kiecolt-Glaser,J. & Glaser,R. Disclosure of traumas and immune function: Health implication for psychotherapy. Paper presented at the 1987 Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C.

Pennebaker, J.W., & Beall, S.K.(1986). Confronting a traumatic event: Toward an understanding of inhibition and disease. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 95, 3, pp. 274-281.

## Not WRITE-Now, PLEASE!

### HOW TO GET YOUR ADULT STUDENTS TO HATE WRITING*

1. Never let them see you write, and absolutely never share anything you have written with your class. Several times throughout the year mention how much you hate to write, and how you would rather just telephone friends long distance.
2. Allow very little time, if any, for writing. Emphasize worksheets whenever possible. People use computers, television, and telephones so much these days, writing is not necessary.
3. If, however, writing must absolutely be taught, always teach it as a separate subject. Incorporating it with other content areas will only confuse the students. After all, math is math, and English is English.
4. Journal writing is a waste of time. Eliminate it from the schedule if you have not already done so. Written work you don't grade is not worth the paper it's written on.
5. Insist that all writing be submitted to you without errors the first time. Rough drafts only double your work.
6. If you find errors in a student's writing, call attention to them in a loud way. Do not worry about the self-esteem or confidence of the student.
7. Seldom have students write about what they read about or what they know about or what they care about.
8. Good writing is actually good handwriting. Be certain to inform your students that neatness takes precedence over ideas.

9. ABE/GED students should not be permitted to read the written work of classmates. What's the use?

10. Ignore any signs of creativity or critical thinking. Emphasize that there is always only one best way to write.

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* Adapted from a piece by Judith Van Dyke Scourfield which appeared in the April 1986 issue of _The PCTE Bulletin_.

## A WRITE-Now Teacher's Reward

### A Glorious Day

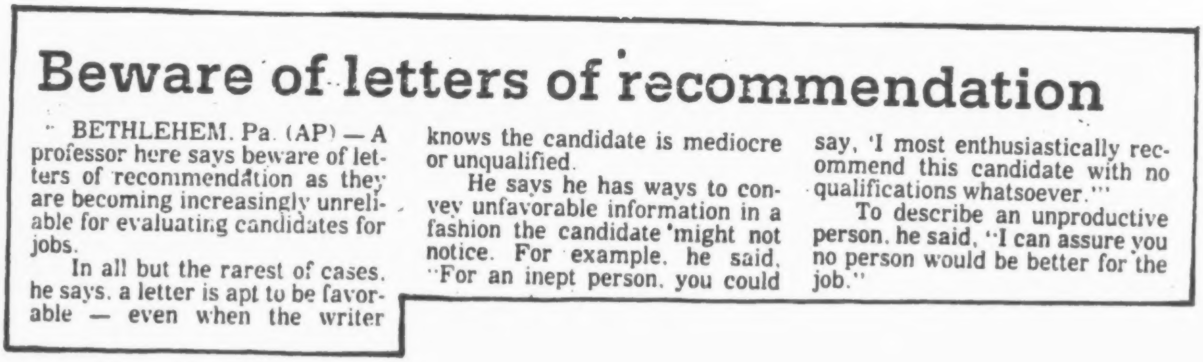
It's a glorious day, when the sun starts
shining.
It makes me feel like getting in my car
and doing some driving.
It makes me feel much better in the morning.
I think it might not be so boring.
The flowers are blooming and the birds
are singing.
It sounds like music the world is
bringing.
I only wish other people felt this way;
we could have a much better life each and
every day.
It's a glorious day when the sun starts
shining, but I'm missing it all by sitting
here writing.
So bye for now, I'm on my way.
I'm going out to enjoy this glorious day!

*******

Although this poem will probably never win any prizes for literary merit, one adult education teacher we know will cherish it for the WRITE reasons.

## A WRITE-NOW ACTIVITY FOR ABE/GED TEACHERS

Have you ever been asked to write a letter of recommendation for a colleague or an ABE/GED student? Because we have written several such letters, we really enjoyed the clipping below from one of our local newspapers.



### Beware of letters of recommendation

BETHLEHEM, Pa. (AP) — A professor here says beware of letters of recommendation as they are becoming increasingly unreliable for evaluating candidates for jobs.

In all but the rarest of cases, he says, a letter is apt to be favorable — even when the writer knows the candidate is mediocre or unqualified.

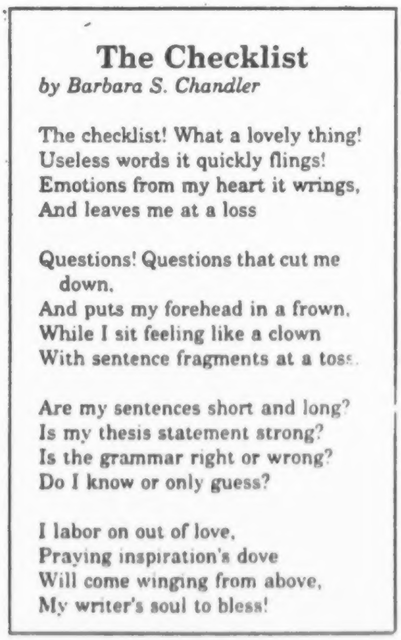
He says he has ways to convey unfavorable information in a fashion the candidate might not notice. For example, he said, "For an inept person, you could say, 'I most enthusiastically recommend this candidate with no qualifications whatsoever.'"

To describe an unproductive person, he said, "I can assure you no person would be better for the job."

We try to tell the truth without any conscious effort at slanting our messages. It's just the clippings that we slant when we put them in our WRITE-Now files. Back to the scissors and the rubber cement!

## ANOTHER ITEM FOR THE WRITE-LIGHT DEPARTMENT

Although we do offer a few checklists in our manual, we can really empathize with Barbara Chandler's lament. Don't rely on checklists to get students through revision exercises.



### The Checklist

*by Barbara S. Chandler*

The checklist! What a lovely thing!
Useless words it quickly flings!
Emotions from my heart it wrings,
And leaves me at a loss

Questions! Questions that cut me down,
And puts my forehead in a frown,
While I sit feeling like a clown
With sentence fragments at a toss.

Are my sentences short and long?
Is my thesis statement strong?
Is the grammar right or wrong?
Do I know or only guess?

I labor on out of love,
Praying inspiration's dove
Will come winging from above,
My writer's soul to bless!

From: The January 1987 issue of TABLET, Tennessee's Adult Basic Education Newsletter.

## WRITING, DREAMS, AND THE POWER OF POSITIVE THINKING: A GED INSTRUCTOR FREEWRITES TOWARD ACTION

I've been reading a lot about man's ability to shape clay, mix and arrange paints, and build something out of raw materials such as wood and cement. Man can envision a finished product, assemble his basic materials, select his tools and then work through that vision to an actual painting, piece of sculpture, or even a multi-story building. Men working together can create new environments and technologies to create and sustain them.

Can I take my body, a really challenging pile of used and abused raw material, and successfully re-shape it according to my image of the body ideal for a soft-bellied mesomorph? Can I be an artist with my own body as medium and with free weights as my tools?

As the artist selects his medium and his tools, I must also study my potential for body "building." I need to plan for a long, carefully executed series of shaping and sculpturing. As an artist must often work slowly and cautiously to approach the vision, so too must I have great patience. I must be willing to set short-term goals, always keeping the big picture in mind. I must be willing to keep at the task until I am satisfied that the next goal can be reached.

*******

By taking ten minutes or so as often as possible, usually three times a week, to freewrite toward some personal goal, this WRITE-Now instructor practices what he preaches - he writesfor life.

## CONFERENCE QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

**Some Possible Types of Questions and Responses Used During Conferences**

Tell me about your piece of writing.
What part do you like the best? Why?
Can you tell me more about it?
I'm not sure I understand this part.
Do you have enough information?
Do you have too much information?
How did you feel when this happened?
Did you write your feelings?
Why did you choose this subject to write about?
Do you have more than one story?
What did you learn from this piece of writing?
What do you intend to do in the next draft?
How does this draft sound when you read it outloud?
Why is this important to you?
How does this piece compare to other pieces you have written? Why?
What kinds of changes have you made from your last draft?
Underline the part that tells what the draft is about.
Circle the part that is the most exciting.
What do you think you can do to make this piece better?
What problems did you have or are you having?
What is the most important thing you are trying to say?
What works so well you'd like to try to develop it further?
How do you feel about your story?
This is what I liked about it.
Are you happy with your beginning and ending?
Explain how your title fits your story.
What are your action words? Can you add others?
What do you need help on?
Where is this piece taking you?
Did you tell us about something or did you show us by using examples?
Can you think of a different way to say this?
Does the beginning grab the reader's attention?
What questions do you have of me?

As we hold brief conferences with our ABE/GED students, we should try to articulate some of the questions which, as Donald Murray says in Learning by Teaching(1982, p. 63), "published writers no longer need to articulate while they are listening and relistening, writing and rewriting."

## GENERATING CONFERENCE QUESTIONS: HOCs

Student's Draft

I believe that sports are good for children because it keeps them out of trouble and helps them to use their heads more. And think, plus exercise their minds. Sports make children more alert.

I think if there were more sports there would be less crime, and people would learn to get along with one another.

Instructor's Questions and Comments

OK, you have plenty of good ideas to explore and explain. Let me just ask a few questions from an interested reader's point of view.

How do sports keep children out of trouble?

How does it help them to use their heads?

" " " " " " think?

" " " " " " exercise their minds?

How do sports help make children more alert?

How do organized sports help kids to get along with each other?

Why do you think there would be less crime if more children were involved in organized sports?

I hope I didn't panic you as I was asking those questions. You really sparked some interest in my mind with your first draft. What I think I can explain and connect should be right there in your piece. I want to know how you reach your conclusions or support your opinions.

Where do you plan to begin your revision process?

Student's Reply

I see your point about the need for examples and explanations. I want to write about how more sports will probably mean less crime. I see this kind of possibility every day in my neighborhood. Yes, I can get into this topic!

## A Typical Progression in a Process-Comfortable ABE Program

### A Student's Writing Sample

What do I like to do?

I like to read. I have two cats and two dogs and a ferret. I like doing things a lot and I do housework and like to help people. I watch t.v. and do puzzles. I like doing reading problems. I take my dogs for a walk a lot. I also like to cook.

### Brief Conference

Teacher: I see you have no trouble keeping busy! Good. Would you like to pick one of your interests for some more in-school writing?

Student: Yes. What should I write about?

Teacher: That's your decision, but I was attracted by your mentioning of the pet ferret. Would you like to tell me more about the ferret?

Student: Sure.

### From Ferret Piece

My Ferret

I found my ferret outside in the alley. He was all dirty with oil and grease. I had to wash him. He is a cute little ferret. He climbs out of his cage and eats catfood and dogfood. I will start taking him for walks when I get him a harness. He sleeps most of the time.

## Second Brief Conference

**Teacher:** It must be interesting around your house. How do the other pets react to the ferret?

**Student:** Things can get pretty wild.

**Teacher:** I can just imagine! Would you like to describe what things are like with cats, dogs, and a ferret in the same house?

**Student:** I've already started to do that.

**Teacher:** I'll see you later. Write on.

## From Ferret Piece - Part II

### It Isn't Ferret All (Groan!)

The dogs like to fight the ferret, and the ferret fights them back. Sometimes it gets noisy in the house. I have to put the dogs in the dining room so they'll leave the ferret alone.

My one dog's name is Lady. She is a nice dog, but she claws at my ferret. The other dog's name is Raffy, and he really doesn't like the ferret. The ferret's name is Samey. My cats don't like Samey either.

## Teacher's Comment:

The student responded well to these short conferences. Soon she started to write about her work experience, her cooking skills, and her desire to help people. Other pieces stressed her hopes for job-training opportunities after she gets her GED requirement out of the way.

## A WRITE-NOW IDEA FOR ABE/GED COUNSELORS AND INSTRUCTORS

Read Susie's short but powerful success story.

### My Success Story

I dropped out of high school when I was sixteen. Two years later, I was an unemployed and unmarried mother of two children - one just two months old. I needed to get a GED diploma in order to get into a job training program.

After reading a brochure describing a program for teen parents, I made a very important phone call and was soon enrolled in the program. Because my child care and transportation needs were met by the program, I was able to attend a cooperating adult education program three afternoons a week.

In just three months of study, including many hours of reading and math work at home, I was encouraged to take the GED tests. I passed easily and was accepted into the job training program.

In six months, when I complete the training, I'll have an opportunity to get the kind of full-time job that I've always dreamed of having.

*******

Can you guess where Susie was, progress-wise, when she wrote this piece? In the training program, with six months to go? No, that is not where she was. When she wrote her success-story-in-the-making, she was getting ready to take her first GED test. Her ABE/GED counselor had suggested that she write into her future as though she had already accomplished some of her goals. She wrote to set goals and to feel good about reaching those goals.

We are confident that Susie will succeed.

## SOME TIPS FOR SHARING AND SUPPORT GROUPS

1.) Keep the groups small. Three to five fellow writers or writing fellows can make it work.

2.) Allow sufficient time for papers to be read orally or silently. It might be better to start with silent sharing. Papers can be exchanged around the sharing circle.

3.) Take a minute of silence, after reading or listening, to reflect on each paper.

4.) If written comments are requested, write them on separate paper. Do not write on a classmate's paper.

5.) Always find something good to say about the writing of a fellow student or group sharer.

6.) Try pointing out words or phrases which made an impact on you. Point out instances where or when the writing seemed full of voice or had a lot of energy.

7.) Summarize the writing by quickly telling what you felt were the main points and feelings.

8.) Tell your reactions to the piece. What happened to you as you read the paper? Or as you listened to the paper?

9.) Ask questions that might help the writer to:
   - fill in missing details
   - explain or illustrate a point
   - bring out a personal highlight, a focus for showing purposes
   - consider combining or rearranging sentences for better organization or emphasis
   - improve word choice.

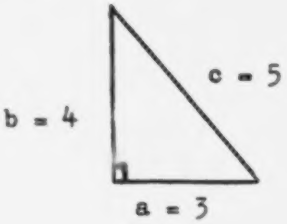
10.) Indicate spelling, punctuation, and other mechanical/grammatical problems which really get in the way, which scream for correction.

## Some WAC Illustrations - Math

The GED instructor gave a ten-minute lesson on the Pythagorean Theorem. He worked through an example on the chalkboard, asked for questions, and erased all of the illustration except $\underline{a^2 + b^2 = c^2}$. He passed out lined composition paper and directed his ABE/GED students to write about what they had learned, what they wanted to have clarified, and what they could apply to real-life or practical math situations. The students understood that they were participating in learning-centered writing, that they were improving their learning power by writing about the math lesson.

$$\underline{a^2 + b^2 = c^2}$$

### Student 1



$a^2$ would be one side(leg) of the triangle squared.

$b^2$ would be the other leg squared.

Then you would add them together to equal $c^2$.

Take the square root of $c^2$ to get c.

$a^2 = 9$; $b^2 = 16$; $a^2 + b^2 = 25$; the square root of 25 is 5; the third side of the right triangle is 5 units long.

### Student 2

This is the Pythagorean Theorem. It tells us how to figure the length of one side of a right triangle when we know the lengths of the other two sides. This triangle I drew does not give you the distance of side c. You have to figure it out for yourself. This is how I did it. Square . . . .

### Student 3

The meaning of the "title" to me is that I can find the hypotenuse of a right triangle if I know the lengths of a and b. I know I must square the lengths . . . .

Student 4

. . . this works with any triangle. You multiply the one leg times itself and then . . . .

*******

The instructor took a few minutes to look through these directed or focused learning-centered writing submissions. As obvious from Student 4's comment, he did some immediate review to make sure that he had most of the students on the WRITE track, mathematically speaking.

Such learning-centered, non-threatening writing exercises really help to get adult students into the heart of the subject matter. They become learners rather than GED preparation students who just want to pass the tests. The writing helps them to get some ownership in the teaching-learning business. They see that what they contribute is helping the instructor to meet their needs WRITE-Now.

## Writing and Learning Across the Curriculum - Math

Most experienced ABE/GED instructors realize that long division can be a very difficult procedure for the adult student to master. In the example illustrated below, the ABE student attempts to explain how he solved the division problem.

### Student Writes Out The Steps

I know there is one four in four.

I put a one over the four, and then I put a four below the four to prove it, that four times one is four.

I bring down the three. Oh, I forget to say that four minus four has no remainder.

Four will not go into three, so I put a zero over the three to hold the place. Then I bring down the six.

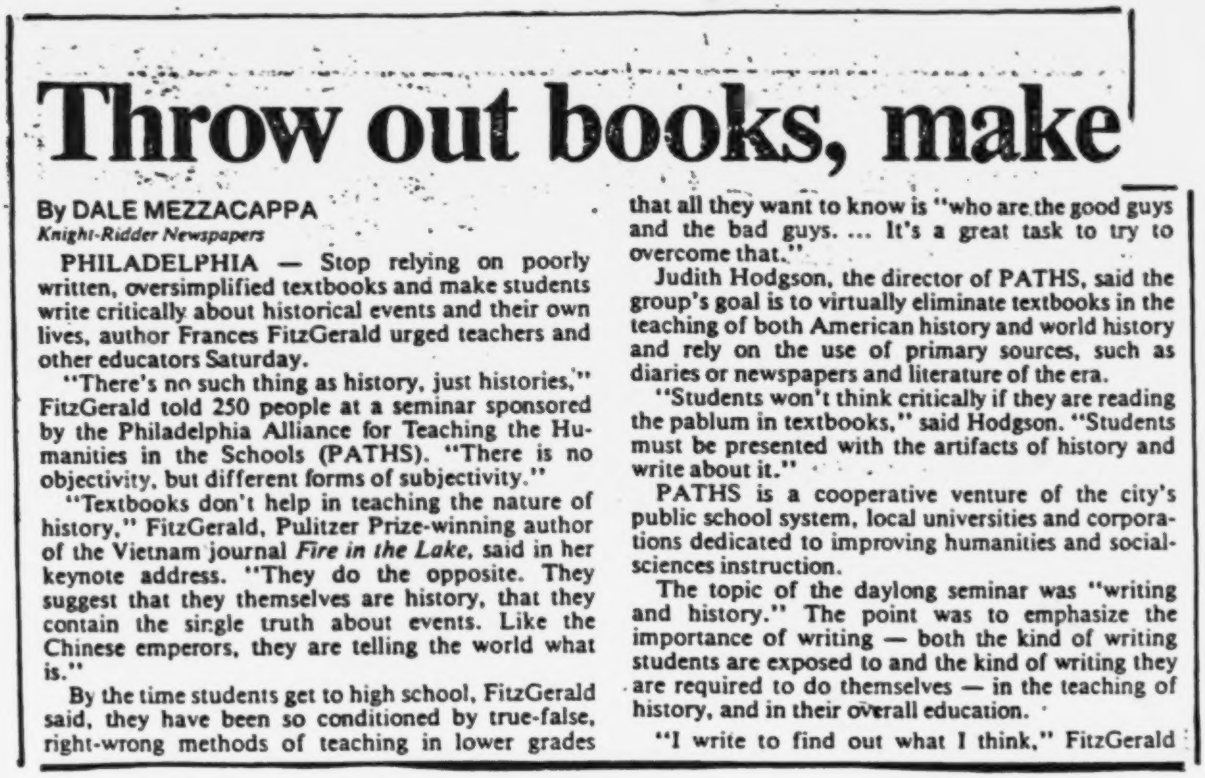
I now have 36. Will four go into 36? Yes.

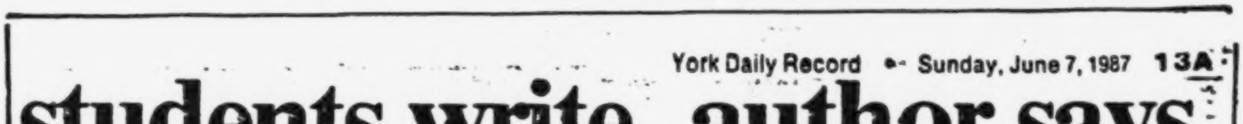
I know that four times nine is 36. I put a nine over the six and put 36 down below the 36. There is no remainder. It comes out even at 109.

$$\begin{array}{r} 109 \\ 4\overline{)436} \\ \underline{4}\phantom{36} \\ 36 \\ \underline{36} \\ 0 \end{array}$$

This exercise can be very effective, especially in an individualized ABE/GED program setting. Just don't expect beginning dividers to do as well as the student did in the above example. He did this well after doing many problems.

Instructors wouldn't want to do this exercise with every student, but it might be the means to a personal math "breakthrough" for the right student. Don't miss the WRITE opportunity to teach!





York Daily Record • Sunday, June 7, 1987 13A

# Throw out books, make students write, author says

By DALE MEZZACAPPA
*Knight-Ridder Newspapers*

PHILADELPHIA — Stop relying on poorly written, oversimplified textbooks and make students write critically about historical events and their own lives, author Frances FitzGerald urged teachers and other educators Saturday.

"There's no such thing as history, just histories," FitzGerald told 250 people at a seminar sponsored by the Philadelphia Alliance for Teaching the Humanities in the Schools (PATHS). "There is no objectivity, but different forms of subjectivity."

"Textbooks don't help in teaching the nature of history," FitzGerald, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of the Vietnam journal *Fire in the Lake*, said in her keynote address. "They do the opposite. They suggest that they themselves are history, that they contain the single truth about events. Like the Chinese emperors, they are telling the world what is."

By the time students get to high school, FitzGerald said, they have been so conditioned by true-false, right-wrong methods of teaching in lower grades that all they want to know is "who are the good guys and the bad guys. ... It's a great task to try to overcome that."

Judith Hodgson, the director of PATHS, said the group's goal is to virtually eliminate textbooks in the teaching of both American history and world history and rely on the use of primary sources, such as diaries or newspapers and literature of the era.

"Students won't think critically if they are reading the pablum in textbooks," said Hodgson. "Students must be presented with the artifacts of history and write about it."

PATHS is a cooperative venture of the city's public school system, local universities and corporations dedicated to improving humanities and social-sciences instruction.

The topic of the daylong seminar was "writing and history." The point was to emphasize the importance of writing — both the kind of writing students are exposed to and the kind of writing they are required to do themselves — in the teaching of history, and in their overall education.

"I write to find out what I think," FitzGerald said. Writing is thinking, she said, and students who cannot write well cannot think critically.

She said most Americans have no grasp of language or its power and possess an illiteracy that is more dangerous than the inability to decode words. It is the schools' task to give students the skill to grapple with ideas, concepts and values, she said.

In her 1979 book, *America Revisited*, FitzGerald pointed out that most textbooks are written not by scholars, but "by committee," and are often mythologized, non-controversial versions of events.

"The publishers are always trying to find the middle of the road," she said, noting that books change depending on social and political trends. "They are always taking soundings about what you and the children want to hear."

Often there are no actors in the presentation of events, as typified in such textbook sentences as: "The Era of Reconstruction left many problems open for the future," or "Watergate was a terrible problem President Nixon faced."

"There's no indication of who caused (these events) or what really happened," FitzGerald said.

Hodgson said that rethinking the teaching of history does more than just raise issues of revisionism; it gets at the heart of how students are taught.

For instance: The standard textbook description of William Penn is that he founded Pennsylvania, believed in religious tolerance and was a Quaker who did not drink or believe in violence. That's what the student is taught and expected to faithfully memorize. There is not a whole lot of room for discussion or debate.

But students who are given Penn's journals and ledgers to read, instead of a mythologized textbook description, will discover that he bought liquor and guns — for the Indians.

What did that mean? Despite his personal code, Penn apparently got the Indians drunk and gave them guns — which they coveted — so he would have an easier time moving them off their land to make room for the colonists, Hodgson said.

Students presented with such raw material of history can decide for themselves how they react to this, learning not only about Penn, but thinking about their own values as well, Hodgson said.

WRITE-Now instructors encourage their students to make learning log entries and participate in others kinds of learning-centered writing.

If we can write it down, chances are we understand it. The "non-writers" in the group wanted to know why they couldn't just talk to . . . . But even these people came to see how writing down their ideas in a succinct and personal way actually helped them to learn the ideas better.

E. Michael Brady
A Letter in LifeLong Learning,
AAACE, April 1987

## TWO INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACHES TO "THE LIFE STAGES OF A WRITE-NOW ARTICLE"

### During the Actual Process

As we worked on the drafts of our WRITE-Now newspaper article, we shared the messy business of drafting and revising with our students and colleagues. We asked staff and student volunteers for their reactions to the early drafts. We also shared the constructive criticism offered so very generously by Steve, a part-time journalist and full-time human services professional.

We think it is important for our students to see that we don't qualify as writers just because we are teachers and they don't qualify as non-writers just because they are students. We wanted them to see how an article is carefully put together from idea to published version.

### After the Publication

In our one-to-one employment-oriented program several students mentioned to us that they had read the article in a local Sunday paper. We decided to take advantage of our WRITE-Now connections by showing them bits and pieces of our pile of drafts and revisions. A few of our ABE/GED students were surprised that so much work went into the article. We assured them that we had enjoyed the process even though three pages of suggestions from our journalist friend had sent us back to the typewriter more times than we cared to remember. We had applied the seat of our pants to the chair and worked our way through to publication. It wasn't an easy two-shot process.

## THE LIFE STAGES OF A WRITE-NOW NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

### First Draft - Typed from Handwritten Copy

/

Since July of 1986, three members of the L.I.U.'s Adult Basic Education staff have been encouraging their students to write for different purposes and audiences. These adult education instructors have
examining their own teaching methods,
been ^ studying textbooks on the teaching of writing at all levels, and they have been collecting teaching strategies from other adult education practitioners in PA and across the country.

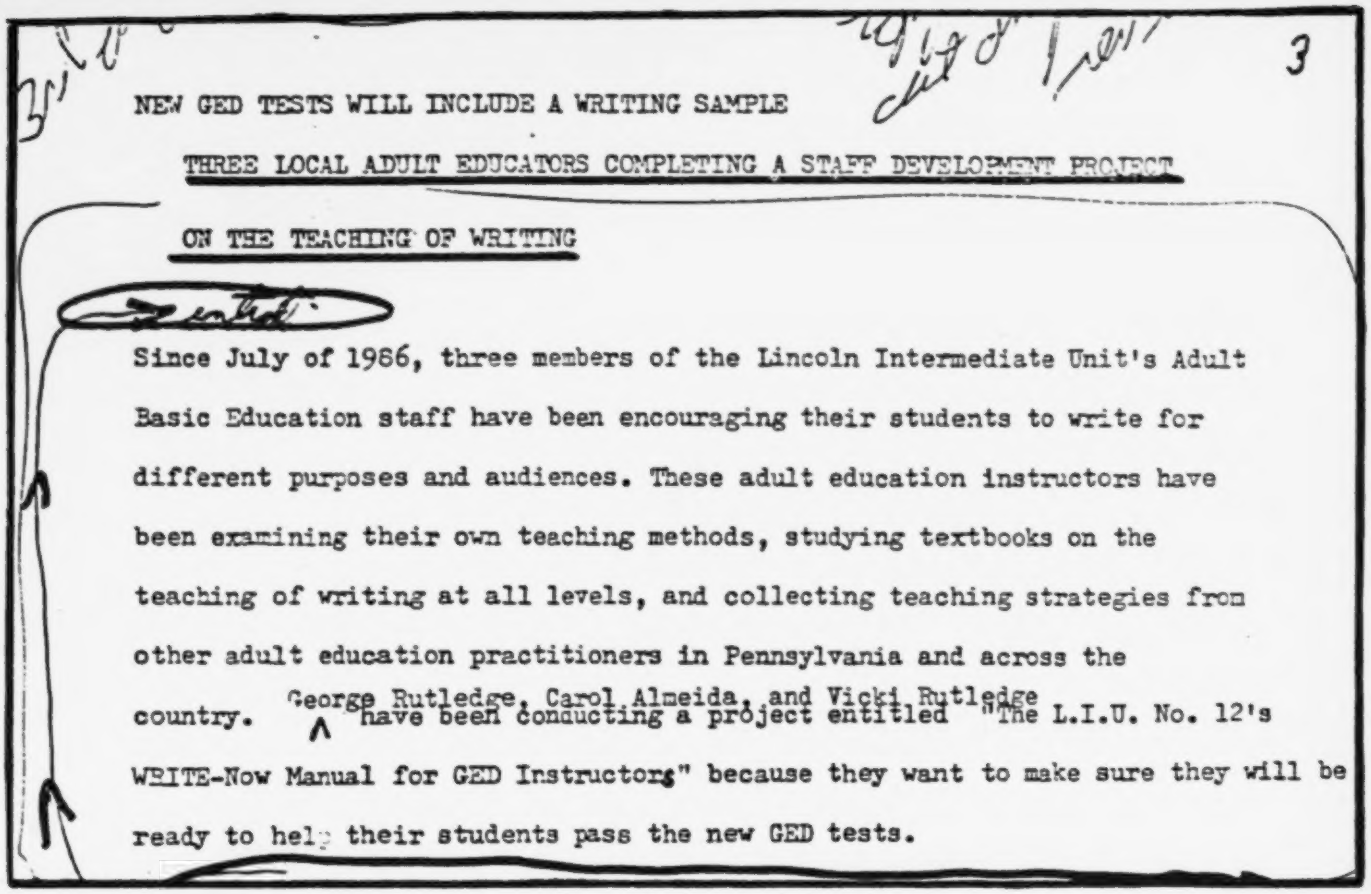
adult ed.
George Rutledge, Carol Almeida, and Vicki Rutledge are three teachers
their students
who want to be ready for the new GED tests in 1988.

after Jan. of 1988
When adult education students who hope to take the new GED tests

### Second Draft - Typed with Initial Editing

2

Since July of 1986, three members of the Lincoln Intermediate Unit's Adult Basic Education staff have been encouraging their students to write for different purposes and audiences. These adult education instructors have been examining their own teaching methods, studying textbooks on the teaching of writing at all levels, and collecting teaching strategies from other adult education practitioners in Pennsylvania and across the
George Rutledge, Carol Almeida, and Vicki Rutledge
country. ^ have been conducting a project entitled "The L.I.U. No. 12's WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors" because they want to make sure they will be ready to help their students pass the new GED tests.



3

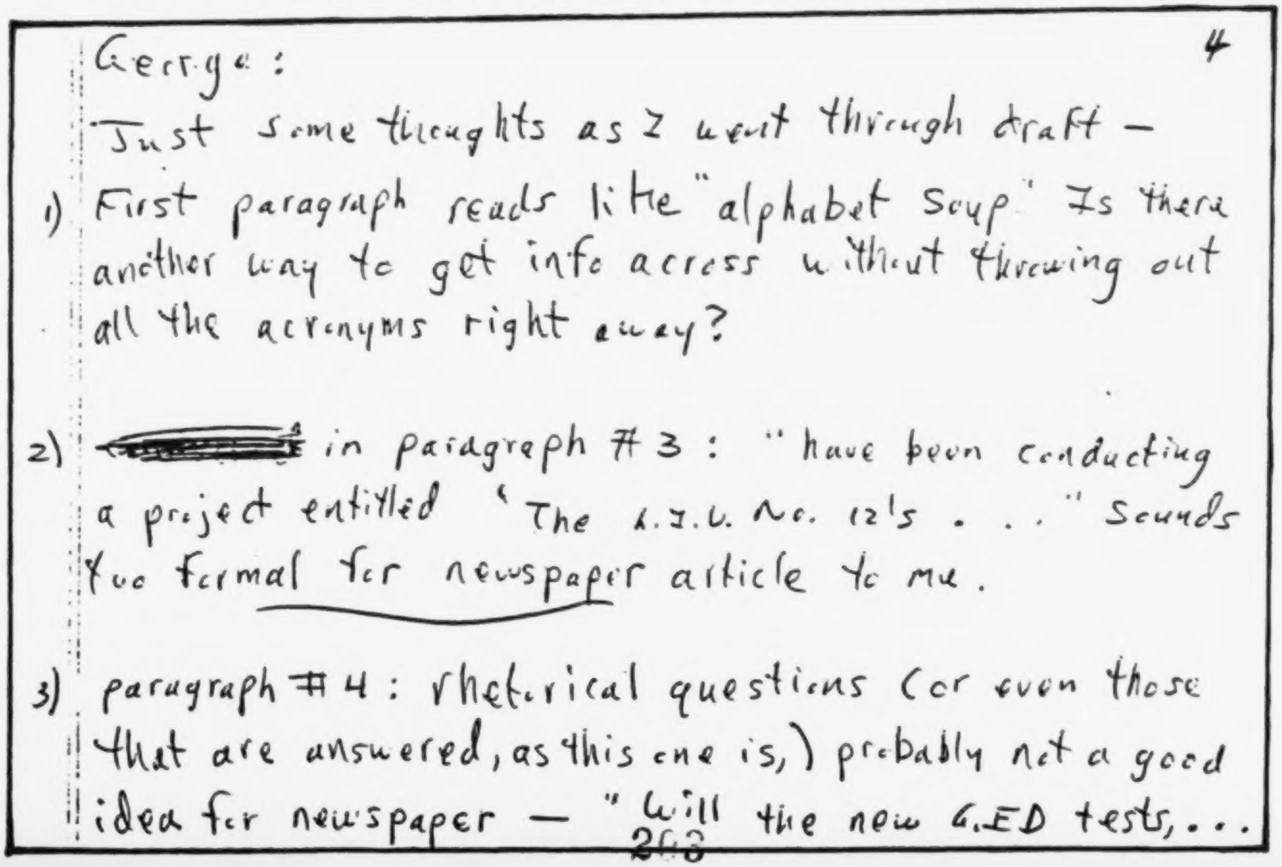
NEW GED TESTS WILL INCLUDE A WRITING SAMPLE

THREE LOCAL ADULT EDUCATORS COMPLETING A STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROJECT ON THE TEACHING OF WRITING

[illegible]

Since July of 1986, three members of the Lincoln Intermediate Unit's Adult Basic Education staff have been encouraging their students to write for different purposes and audiences. These adult education instructors have been examining their own teaching methods, studying textbooks on the teaching of writing at all levels, and collecting teaching strategies from other adult education practitioners in Pennsylvania and across the country. George Rutledge, Carol Almeida, and Vicki Rutledge have been conducting a project entitled "The L.I.U. No. 12's WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors" because they want to make sure they will be ready to help their students pass the new GED tests.

From: A Memo of Constructive Criticism by a Local Journalist



4

George:

Just some thoughts as I went through draft —

1) First paragraph reads like "alphabet soup." Is there another way to get info across without throwing out all the acronyms right away?

2) ~~[illegible]~~ in paragraph #3: "have been conducting a project entitled 'The L.I.U. No. 12's . . ." Sounds too formal for newspaper article to me.

3) paragraph #4: rhetorical questions (or even those that are answered, as this one is,) probably not a good idea for newspaper — "Will the new G.ED tests, . . .

4th Draft(in response to journalist's suggestions)

three names should be more "up front" in paragraph — probably in 2nd sentence

During the past year three members of the Lincoln Intermediate Unit's Adult Basic Education staff have been encouraging their students to write for different purposes and audiences.* These adult education instructors have been examining their own teaching methods, studying textbooks on the teaching of writing at all levels, and collecting teaching strategies from other adult education practitioners

(or maybe adult educators?) teachers?

- 2 -

then use "These adult education instructors" here

in Pennsylvania and across the country. George Rutledge, Carol Almeida, and Vicki Rutledge have been conducting a project entitled "The WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors" because they want to make sure they will be ready to help their students pass the new GED tests.

([illegible])

5th Draft - Copy of Selection from Press Release

6

During the past year three members of the Lincoln Intermediate Unit's Adult Basic Education staff have been encouraging their students to write for different purposes and audiences. George Rutledge, Carol Almeida, and Vicki Rutledge have been examining their own teaching methods, studying textbooks on the teaching of writing at all levels, and collecting teaching strategies from other adult education teachers in Pennsylvania and across the country. They have been conducting a project entitled "The WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors" because

-more-

## Final Response from Journalist

7

TO: George R.
FROM: Steve
DATE: 6/8/87

I made a few more suggestions on the latest draft. Again, I think it would be best to hold it to 3 pages, but I'm not sure there's much more that can be trimmed from this present form.

## Another Draft: Revised for Submission to PCTE Newsletter

to plan, draft,revise, and edit their essays.

June 30, 1987 =

8

During the past year three members of the Lincoln Intermediate Unit's Adult Basic Education staff have been encouraging their students to write for different purposes and audiences. These adult education instructors ~~have been~~ examining their own teaching methods, studying textbooks on the teaching of writing at all levels, and collecting teaching strategies from other adult education practitioners

- 2 -

in Pennsylvania and across the country. George Rutledge, Carol Almeida, and Vicki Rutledge have been conducting a project entitled "The WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors" because they want to make sure they will be ready to help their students pass the new GED tests.

Dear Project A.B.E. Student,

As you can see from the attached article about our WRITE-Now Project, it is time for us, your instructors, to do some writing.

Since last summer we have been reading, thinking, and talking about the teaching of writing in adult education programs. We have asked you to write about many things. You have had an opportunity to improve your writing skills by participating in the WRITE-Now Club. Now it is time for us to collect the WRITE-Now notebooks and other important bits and pieces of writing that you and your fellow students have rendered for the WRITE cause.

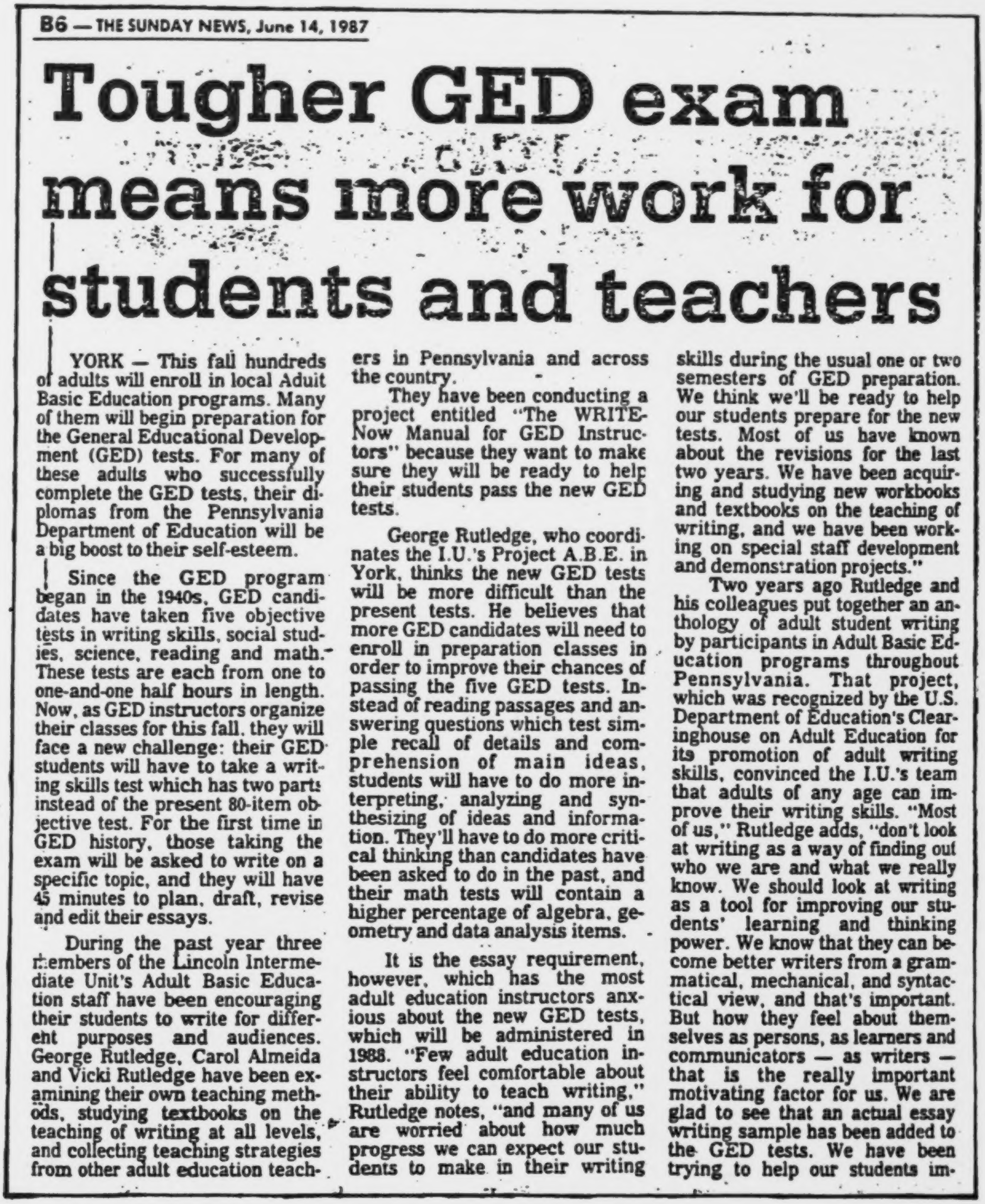
Before we push the "panic button" on this special project, however, we want to invite you to make some last-minute contributions. Between now and July 1, 1987, we will consider whatever you care to share with us. We are especially interested in reading short pieces of writing which you have recently composed. If we like what you have done and you give us permission to put your writing in the manual that we are developing, we'll try to include all or part of your contribution(s). Think about it - something you have written or helped to write might be read by students and teachers all across Pennsylvania and in other states!

If you want to make a last-minute contribution but do not have anything in mind, let us know. We have plenty of ideas and topics for you to examine. We would be very happy to receive all of the writing that you have produced in the process of coming up with a final draft - your notes, your freewriting/rough drafts, and your revisions.

There are a lot of adult education teachers who are very much interested in what you are writing and in what you are thinking about in terms of writing in and out of a school setting. Write now!

George, Dot, Carol, Lorene, and
Vicki

THE PUBLISHED VERSION - WITH PHOTO



B6 — THE SUNDAY NEWS, June 14, 1987

# Tougher GED exam means more work for students and teachers

YORK — This fall hundreds of adults will enroll in local Adult Basic Education programs. Many of them will begin preparation for the General Educational Development (GED) tests. For many of these adults who successfully complete the GED tests, their diplomas from the Pennsylvania Department of Education will be a big boost to their self-esteem.

Since the GED program began in the 1940s, GED candidates have taken five objective tests in writing skills, social studies, science, reading and math. These tests are each from one to one-and-one half hours in length. Now, as GED instructors organize their classes for this fall, they will face a new challenge: their GED students will have to take a writing skills test which has two parts instead of the present 80-item objective test. For the first time in GED history, those taking the exam will be asked to write on a specific topic, and they will have 45 minutes to plan, draft, revise and edit their essays.

During the past year three members of the Lincoln Intermediate Unit's Adult Basic Education staff have been encouraging their students to write for different purposes and audiences. George Rutledge, Carol Almeida and Vicki Rutledge have been examining their own teaching methods, studying textbooks on the teaching of writing at all levels, and collecting teaching strategies from other adult education teachers in Pennsylvania and across the country.

They have been conducting a project entitled "The WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors" because they want to make sure they will be ready to help their students pass the new GED tests.

George Rutledge, who coordinates the I.U.'s Project A.B.E. in York, thinks the new GED tests will be more difficult than the present tests. He believes that more GED candidates will need to enroll in preparation classes in order to improve their chances of passing the five GED tests. Instead of reading passages and answering questions which test simple recall of details and comprehension of main ideas, students will have to do more interpreting, analyzing and synthesizing of ideas and information. They'll have to do more critical thinking than candidates have been asked to do in the past, and their math tests will contain a higher percentage of algebra, geometry and data analysis items.

It is the essay requirement, however, which has the most adult education instructors anxious about the new GED tests, which will be administered in 1988. "Few adult education instructors feel comfortable about their ability to teach writing," Rutledge notes, "and many of us are worried about how much progress we can expect our students to make in their writing skills during the usual one or two semesters of GED preparation. We think we'll be ready to help our students prepare for the new tests. Most of us have known about the revisions for the last two years. We have been acquiring and studying new workbooks and textbooks on the teaching of writing, and we have been working on special staff development and demonstration projects."

Two years ago Rutledge and his colleagues put together an anthology of adult student writing by participants in Adult Basic Education programs throughout Pennsylvania. That project, which was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education's Clearinghouse on Adult Education for its promotion of adult writing skills, convinced the I.U.'s team that adults of any age can improve their writing skills. "Most of us," Rutledge adds, "don't look at writing as a way of finding out who we are and what we really know. We should look at writing as a tool for improving our students' learning and thinking power. We know that they can become better writers from a grammatical, mechanical, and syntactical view, and that's important. But how they feel about themselves as persons, as learners and communicators — as writers — that is the really important motivating factor for us. We are glad to see that an actual essay writing sample has been added to the GED tests. We have been trying to help our students im-

The LITTLE HOU

Sunday News/Tanya Wood

Carol Almeida, George Rutledge and Vicki Rutledge, GED instructors, are shown outside "The Little House" on Eagar Street and Boundary Avenue.

prove their writing skills for several years. Now we have a very significant message from the GED Testing Service of the American Council on Education — that writing skills are valued and will be tested."

The I.U. team has been talking with other adult education instructors across Pennsylvania, trying to collect and field-test recommended writing activities and teaching strategies. Now it's time for them to do a considerable amount of writing of their own. They have to produce a manual for other GED teachers to use in helping their students to become better writers. Along with the manual, they are contracted through the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Division of Adult Basic Education to produce an accompanying audio cassette tape and an in-service workshop guide.

Vicki Rutledge, who is the GED instructor at the I.U.'s Adult Learning Center in York, and Carol Almeida, who serves as an English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor for the I.U., have been supporting the WRITE-Now project by working with their students and meeting on a weekly basis to share their progress. Ms. Almeida notes that the manual which they will develop this summer will be distributed to adult education resource centers and to anyone who is interested in the team's work with A.B.E. students. "We have enjoyed the chance to be writing advocates with our students and with our adult education colleagues," she adds.

Looking to the future, Vicki Rutledge talked about a new project. "George will coordinate a project which will focus on the uses of modern poetry as a stimulus for adult student writing. Carol will continue to study the use of the dialogue journal in her ESL classes, and I will be collecting and responding to writing samples from our GED students.

Next summer these three instructors will have another opportunity to share their enthusiasm for the teaching of writing in adult education programs. They have already been notified that their project will be supported by a federal grant.

When we do the audit of the composing process, we ought, I think, to ask ourselves what we've lost as well as what we've gained. To write meaningfully takes some guts because it inevitably reveals your most significant failure as a human being: your inability to say what you really mean.

W. Ross Winterowd in
Research in the Teaching of English - October 1986

# SOME RESOURCE REVIEW SELECTIONS AND A WRITE-NOW BIBLIOGRAPHY

From Pat Parnell's Review of Writing: Teachers And Children At Work by Donald Graves

Heinemann Educational Books, 1983 - In The National Writing Project Network Newsletter February, 1984

"Although most of the students in Writing are elementary or intermediate age, the problems with which they struggle still plague the high school student and the adult writer. In the chapter, 'See the Writing Process Develop,' Graves parallels the same process ingredients in three writers: Mary, first grade; John, fourth grade; and his own writing as an adult. In narrative vignettes he follows the work from the choice of topic and rehearsal through the first composing and text revisions. The writers are on different levels, but the process is the same."

## THE FLIP SIDE OF LITERACY

Writing, of course, is the flip side of literacy. Without writing, there would be nothing to read. If we teachers purport to nurture our students' growth in writing, to have them believe that writing matters in the world, just as reading does, then we ourselves must write. We cannot merely talk about the importance of writing. We must live it. Anything less makes counterfeit the teaching of full literacy, that precious coin of the realm.

From: Clearing The Way by Tom Romano,
Heinemann Educational Books, Inc.,
Portsmouth, NH, 1987(p. 47).

As we have often stated in connection with our uses of ideas from the works of Donald Murray, Donald Graves, and many others, ABE/GED instructors should not pass over books which seem to focus on or actually do focus on the teaching of writing in non-ABE settings. Romano's new book is terrific reading for ABE/GED practitioners. Our only regret is that we didn't get it soon enough to refer to more often in our WRITE-Now materials.

Clearing The Way: Working With Teenage Writers would be hard for youth professionals to put down. Because we work with a few teenagers, including pregnant and parenting teens in our ABE programs, we couldn't put it down. Romano's book receives our highest praise in the how-to-and-why category.

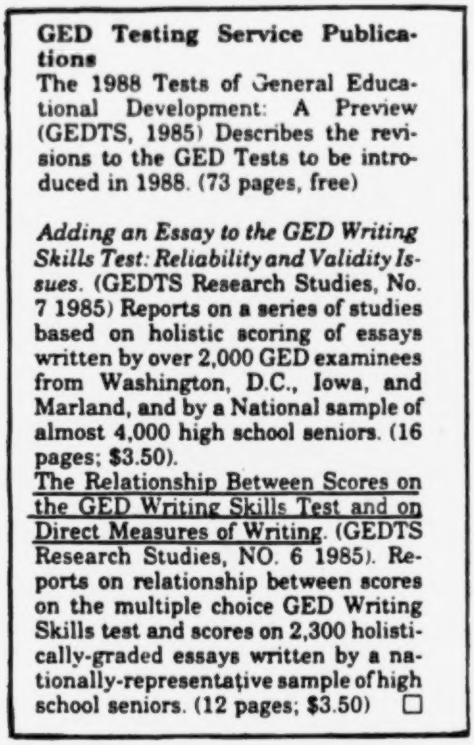
From William D. Lutz's Review of Teaching and Assessing Writing: Recent Advances in Understanding, Evaluating, and Improving Student Performance by Edward M. White

Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 1985

"A wonderful joining of theory and practice providing the reader with the best of both areas. . . . In addition to discussing such important issues as selecting an appropriate test, White discusses the critical issues of how test results are to be used, how testing affects the teaching of writing, and how to evaluate a writing program. And the entire book is strengthened by White's careful and informed scholarship. I have no doubt that this book will immediately become the book against which all others will be measured. Anyone who is even tangentially involved in writing assessment simply must read this book; it is that important."

William Lutz is chair of the Department of English at Rutgers University. We support his evaluation of White's book. Now that our GED students will have to write short essays as part of their GED testing experience, we ABE/GED instructors should be more than "tangentially involved in writing assessment."

## TWO ON-TARGET RESEARCH STUDIES



**GED Testing Service Publications**
The 1988 Tests of General Educational Development: A Preview (GEDTS, 1985) Describes the revisions to the GED Tests to be introduced in 1988. (73 pages, free)

*Adding an Essay to the GED Writing Skills Test: Reliability and Validity Issues.* (GEDTS Research Studies, No. 7 1985) Reports on a series of studies based on holistic scoring of essays written by over 2,000 GED examinees from Washington, D.C., Iowa, and Marland, and by a National sample of almost 4,000 high school seniors. (16 pages; $3.50).

The Relationship Between Scores on the GED Writing Skills Test and on Direct Measures of Writing. (GEDTS Research Studies, NO. 6 1985). Reports on relationship between scores on the multiple choice GED Writing Skills test and scores on 2,300 holistically-graded essays written by a nationally-representative sample of high school seniors. (12 pages; $3.50) ☐

From: No. 6(p. 10)

This study demonstrates that scores on the GED Writing Skills test, and to a lesser extent on the GED Reading Skills test, are clearly related to, but substantially different from, those on a direct test of writing proficiency.

From: No. 7(p. 12)

The studies detailed in this report establish several important principles regarding the addition of an essay component to the GED Writing Skills test. First, an essay test will measure skills distinct from those currently measured in the multiple choice Writing Skills test, thus adding an additional degree of validity to the test. Second, essays written by GED examinees can be scored holistically with acceptable degrees of reliability.

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Clipping from December 1986 TABLET.

## Looking for Materials on the NEW G.E.D?

## Contemporary Books Videos EXTRAORDINARY . . .

One of the many advantages of attending the annual midwinter adult education conference is the opportunity to come into contact with new materials. One of the concurrent sessions at this year's conference was a presentation by Contemporary Books of their series for the new GED consisting of staff development videotapes and viewer's guides. Our panel of GED instructors and counselors recently viewed the videotapes (a series of 3 -- An Overview, The Process of Writing, The GED Writing Sample: How to Prepare for the Test) and through the courtesy of Contemporary we got an advance copy of the viewer's guide for the Writing Program. Never have we seen such enthusiasm for new materials on the part of experienced GED instructors and rarely have we had the pleasure of seeing an audio-visual presentation which could only be rated as topnotch for use in GED inservice staff development and/or for instruction of GED students in the classroom.

We must admit the Overview tape and Viewer's Guide cover much of the same information we have received from the GED Test Service and from presentations at our ABE fall workshops. When we brought this to a Contemporary representative's attention we were told Pennsylvania is far ahead of most states in staff development efforts for the new GED and the tapes are designed for country-wide distribution.

We certainly can endorse the Overview tape and guide for program directors who are still looking for a good, succinct orientation program to the new test and we are planning to use the tape with our GED students rather than try to explain the changes in the test format and approach verbally.

The real beauties, however, are the two Writing videotapes and the Viewer's Guide which provide just what GED program administrators want to set up workshops for their instructors.

We are pleased Contemporary dealt with the Writing Program in two videotapes instead of one. The first tape "The Process of Writing: What Works for Teachers and Students" is presented in such a manner that writing teachers and students alike will understand that essay writing is a process and not just sitting down and starting to write. Both tapes present a step-by-step procedure for writing and include an organized format for teaching and/or learning writing for the new GED: "explain the test; discuss scored essays; learn test-taking strategies; practice." GED writing teachers will soon adopt the self-confidence evidenced by the instructor on the tape as he tells his class, "Trust me -- I can show you how to use the 45 minutes you will have on the test to plan, write and proofread your essay."

The tapes are $225 each (including 5 viewer's guides) and before you spend that kind of money you'll want to preview the tapes. They are available on free loan from AdvancE (1-800-992-2283). Contemporary also has a deal to help out adult education programs by offering a Special Writing Package which includes both Writing videotapes and 5 viewer's guides for each at a package price of $325.

Although we like and use Cambridge materials in our GED classes, we are impressed by what we're seeing coming from Contemporary Books and if these excellent videotapes and viewer's guides are an example we look forward to seeing their entire line dealing with the new GED test.

If you don't have a Contemporary Books catalog you would be well advised to order one by contacting Wendy Harris, 180 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60601 or calling Pennsylvania's Contemporary representative Myron Hallock (215-247-0246).

We offer our readers this review of "The Process of Writing: What Works for Teachers and Students" and "The GED Writing Sample: How to Prepare for the Test." Because we had some personal involvement in the process of producing these videos and guides, we will let this review from the April 1987 issue of PA's What's The Buzz? speak for us. Look for our ideas about how to use these tapes in the in-service guide.

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## Some Sources of Write-for -Life Resources

Boynton/Cook Publishers
52 Upper Montclair Plaza
P. O. Box 860
Upper Montclair
New Jersey 07043

Educational Design, Inc.
47 West 13 Street
New York
NY 10011

Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers
433 California Street
San Francisco
CA 94104

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
1111 Kenyon Road
Urbana
Illinois 61801

New Readers Press
1320 Jamesville Avenue
Box 131
Syracuse
New York 13210

Newbury House Publishers, Inc.
Rowley
Massachusetts 01969

Regents Publishing Company, Inc.
2 Park Avenue
New York
NY 10016

Teachers & Writers Collaborative
5 Union Square West
New York
NY 10003

J. Weston Walch, Publisher
Portland
Maine 04104-0658

### Some Sources for Workbooks

Scott, Foresman and Company
Lifelong Learning Division
1900 East Lake Avenue
Glenview, IL 60025

Contemporary Books, Inc.
180 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60601

Cambridge
The Adult Education Company
888 Seventh Avenue
New York, N. Y. 10106

### Newspapers/Newsletters

GED Items - GEDTS
American Council on Education
One Dupont Circle - Suite 20
Washington, D.C. 20036-1193

The Adult Learner
The GED Institute
G Street NW, HCR 81
Waterville
WA 98858

### Professional Journal (s)

LifeLong Learning
AAACE
1201 Sixteenth St., N.W.
Suite 230
Washington, D.C. 20036

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# THE LINCOLN INTERMEDIATE UNIT'S

# WRITE-NOW MANUAL FOR GED INSTRUCTORS

Lincoln Intermediate Unit No. 12(PA)

| Grantor: | Grantee: |
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| Pennsylvania Department of Education<br>Division of Adult Education and<br>Training Programs<br>333 Market Street<br>Harrisburg<br>PA 17126-0333 | Dr. Donald E. Burkins<br>Federal Programs Specialist<br>Lincoln I.U. No. 12<br>P.O. Box 70<br>New Oxford<br>PA 17350 |
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310 Project Contract No. 99-7004 in the amount of $4,859 to Agency No. 1-12-00-000-0 for the period from 7/1/86 to 6/30/87.

Copies of this project's report and products can be obtained from AdvancE at the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Resource Center or from the L.I.U. at Project A.B.E.

This report is a result of a project supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Office of Education and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The opinions expressed herein, however, do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Office of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

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Copies of this project's products and report can be obtained from AdvancE, PDE Resource Center, Pennsylvania Department of Education, 333 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333; or from Project A.B.E.-I.U. 12, The Little House, 619 S. Edgar St., York, PA 17403.

# ABSTRACT

**Title**: The Lincoln Intermediate Unit's WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors

**Address**: L.I.U. No. 12
P.O. Box 70
New Oxford, PA 17350

**Phone Number**: (717) 624-4616
**Project Coordinator**: 854-4154

**Funding**: $4,859.00

**Director(Administration)**: Dr. Donald E. Burkins    Project No. 99-7004
**Project Coordinator**: George E. Rutledge

**Duration of Project**:

**From**: July 1, 1986    **To**: June 30, 1987    **No. of Months**: 12

**Objectives**: The project team developed a manual for GED instructors to use as they attempt to help their ABE/GED students prepare for both the multiple choice and the written essay components of the Writing Skills portion of the new(1988)tests. Guidelines were also written for GED program supervisors to use in providing in-service training for their ABE/GED instructors. An audio cassette tape was also prepared for GED instructors and program administrators to use as part of staff development in the teaching of writing skills.

**Description**: The project team developed and field tested the project's three products: The WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors, The In-Service Program Guide, and an audio cassette tape containing actual selections from teacher-student interactions during the writing process, from topic planning to essay revision. The project team's research and data base was supplemented and enriched throughout the year as relevant studies were examined and summarized for easy use by GED practitioners. Student writing samples, successful teaching practices, and useful teacher resources were solicited and shared across Pennsylvania and beyond.

**Target Audience**: ABE/GED instructors and supervisors.

**Products**: The manual, in-service guide, and audio cassette tape.

**Method of Evaluation**: Weekly project team progress review meetings, formative evaluation at monthly administrative meetings, and feedback from students & staff.

Description:

At its meeting on September 24, 1985, the American Council on Education's Commission on Educational Credit and Credentials approved the addition of an essay component to the GED Writing Skills Test beginning in 1988. For the first time since the GED testing program began during World War II, students pursuing a high school equivalency credential - a GED diploma - will have to write an essay as part of the GED test. The addition of the essay is expected to have a dramatic impact on adult education courses, which have traditionally taught grammar and drill in the name of writing skills. The writing exercise requirement has prompted the addition of expository and other writing units to the adult education programs taken by people preparing for the GED test.

Several states have already geared up to make the curriculum changes that are necessary in order to prepare examinees to demonstrate proficiency on the essay tests. GED preparation programs in Pennsylvania have not been an exception to this major change for the WRITE reasons.

A big job facing writing advocates - those ABE/GED practitioners comfortable with teaching writing - is to find ways to disseminate both a knowledge of and experience in the development of expertise in the measurement, evaluation, and teaching of writing throughout a profession made up of GED instructors who, on the whole, are well-intentioned but typically not very experienced teachers of writing. In response to the staff development needs brought on by the changes in the GED Writing Skills Test, the Lincoln Intermediate Unit No. 12 addressed 1986-87 310 Priority No. 6(provide statewide and regional staff development activities designed to enhance the instructional proficiencies of ABE/GED staff members)by proposing to develop and field test a manual for GED instructors to use as they help their students to prepare for both the multiple choice and the written essay components of the new Writing Skills portion of the GED tests. A program guide for use of the manual and other materials was also written for GED supervisors and workshop facilitators to use in providing in-service training for their GED instructors and other interested ABE colleagues. This project has enabled and will continue to enable GED practitioners to profit from the systematic thinking that has gone into recent research and to understand the important research to come, some of it by ABE/GED teacher-researchers.

The Lincoln Intermediate Unit No. 12 believes that most GED teachers in Pennsylvania are potentially good writing teachers - teachers who write and teach writing - conscientious persons who want to do a good job. They may know little about the teaching of writing, but they are willing to learn.

The activities and techniques described in the WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors can help ABE/GED teachers to become more sophisticated in the holistic assessment and evaluation, especially formative evaluation, of writing. A careful study and subsequent ABE/GED classroom application of the WRITE-Now approach can also help to reduce some of the common abuses of expository writing instruction such as "unclear, pointless, or casual writing assignments; overattention to editing to the detriment of invention and other parts of the writing process; . . . useless or destructive commentary on student work; and failure to encourage and reward revision"(see p. 248 of Teaching and

Assessing Writing by Edward M. White, 1985).

It is clear that most of our ABE/GED students can use assistance in improving their writing skills. Most of them are generally not experienced adult writers who are competent producers of expository prose. GED instructors, who in some cases are already experienced writers, can help their students look at their writing process development by gearing their instruction specifically to a systematic, sequential, and individualized preparation for the essay writing component of the new GED tests.

Part I of the Writing Skills Test to be introduced in 1988 is a multiple choice test of the conventions of English, requiring students to edit paragraphs for elements of sentence structure, usage, and mechanics. The WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors includes teaching strategies and sample exercises for GED teachers to use as they help their students prepare for both parts of the new tests. Part II will be a 45-minute essay writing exercise. Examinees will be provided with a single topic which asks them to present an opinion or an explanation regarding a situation or issue about which adults should be expected to have some general knowledge. The WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors can help GED teachers to deal with essay topic development and selection, peer support-critique groups, and revision procedures.

Our experience with writing assessment has shown us that it cannot and should not be separated from writing instruction. As more and more ABE/GED instructors come to understand the issues and practices of holistic scoring/assessment, the teaching of writing in all content areas and at all levels in ABE programs is certain to improve. The WRITE-Now project team wants to give GED teachers an introduction to holistic assessment and scoring procedures. We have found that one benefit of this training is a continuing dialogue concerning the qualities of good writing that is encouraged when GED instructors, as teachers of writing, discuss the criteria for evaluating essays. We have also found that experience and training in holistic assessment methods can give readers(instructors or judges) the confidence to score or evaluate more critically and constructively. Inflated holistic scores would be a disservice to both the student writers and the emerging ABE/GED writing programs.

The WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors gives ABE/GED instructors the experienced-informed insights of veteran teachers of writing in ABE/GED settings. It gives practitioners the information they will need to improve the writing performance of their students across a broad range of writing competencies such as the generation of ideas, the elaboration of detail, and the response to a specific audience of readers. The manual can help and encourage GED teachers to devote more classroom time to observing their students write and to acquainting their students with the idea that each one of them has a composing process. Once students glimpse what it is they do as they write, they often become willing, even eager, to change their writing habits. The 1983-84 310 Project, The Write-for-Life Program, offered supporting evidence, based on a study of actual GED student writing samples, that ABE/GED teacher in-service training does appear to make a difference in terms of improved student writing performance. It was one of the first ABE program research-based efforts to evaluate adult student writing by using holistic scoring procedures, and it was one of the first 310 projects to advocate the process-conference approach to the teaching of writing in ABE/GED classes.

## THE LINCOLN I.U.'S WRITE-NOW MANUAL FOR GED INSTRUCTORS

Objectives:

I. Develop a manual for ABE/GED instructors to use as they attempt to help their students prepare for both the revised multiple choice portion of the new GED Writing Skills Test and the written essay component.

  A. Field test the instructional techniques in a regular GED class and in an open entry-open exit individualized adult education program.

  B. Write the manual and publish copies for distribution in Pennsylvania and beyond, as the supply lasts.

II. Develop an in-service program guide for GED supervisors and workshop facilitators to use in planning for and providing in-service training for ABE/GED practitioners.

  A. Field test the in-service training guide by using recommended methods and materials during an in-service staff development session for I.U. 12's ABE/GED instructors.

  B. Publish copies for use by GED supervisors and program administrators in Pennsylvania and beyond.

III. Prepare an audio cassette tape for GED supervisors, workshop facilitators, and ABE/GED instructors to use as part of staff development in the teaching of writing skills.

  A. Part One(Side 1)of the tape will be especially suitable for individual and small-group in-service training aimed at helping ABE/GED instructors to be more comfortable with process-conference techniques. Examples of student-teacher interactions should be very valuable.

Objectives(cont.):

B. Part Two(Side 2)of the audio cassette tape will be directed more to GED supervisors and workshop facilitators for use before and during staff in-service training sessions on the teaching of writing in ABE/GED programs.

IV. Acquaint GED practitioners with the theory, methods, and uses of the holistic assessment of writing, including essay scoring procedures.

A. Accomplish this objective mainly through the three products outlined above.

B. Write and submit at least three short articles on the general topics of writing assessment and teaching writing to adult education media for possible publication during the 1986-87 project year. These articles would feature ideas for immediate(WRITE-Now) application.

V. Prepare and submit an outline for evaluation as a possible workshop session during the 1987 Mid-Winter Adult Education Conference in Hershey, Pennsylvania. The workshop proposal will focus on aspects of the teaching of writing such as essay topic development, essay evaluation procedures, and peer support strategies.

Project Administration:

The project director/coordinator, an experienced GED instructor and former coordinator of the L.I.U./Penn State(Capitol Campus)Writing Project, had the primary responsibility for conducting this project. He was assisted by two experienced ABE/GED instructors who also have extensive English language arts teaching backgrounds. The project team worked under the overall administrative supervision of the Lincoln I.U.'s Federal and State Programs Specialist. Central office support was provided by the Lincoln I.U.'s Special Projects Coordinator.

## INTRODUCING THE WRITE-NOW TEAM

### Project Coordinator

George Rutledge works primarily with ABE/GED students as program coordinator and instructor at I.U. 12's Project A.B.E. in York, PA. He also teaches GED classes in the evenings during the school year. George has coordinated several 310 projects, most of them dealing with some aspect of teaching writing in both individualized and group settings. Currently serving as Vice-President for Intermediate Units for the Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of English(PCTE), he is interested in staff development at all levels of education. George is an adjunct instructor of English at Millersville University of PA and a frequent workshop presenter.

### Project Facilitators

Carol Almeida serves the Lincoln Intermediate Unit as an ESL instructor at three sites. Carol has participated in and conducted several staff development workshops in ESL for both paid and volunteer tutors and instructors. She was an advisor to the I. U.'s 1984-85 ABE student anthology project, and she has taught classes in English composition at York College of Pennsylvania. As a part-time instructor at Project A.B.E., Carol also works with ABE/GED students.

Vicki Rutledge, George's wife, has taught ABE/GED students in York since 1979. A former high school yearbook advisor and speech coach, she was a Write-for-Life Associate for I.U. 12's 1983-84 310 project, The Write-for-Life Program,and also assisted with the 1984-85 anthology project.

George, Carol, and Vicki have also taught English language arts classes at the secondary level.

See the newspaper article in this manual for more information about their present and future collaborations in the WRITE directions.

## Procedures:

### General Design:

As outlined above under the objectives' description, the project team developed and field tested the project's three products. The team's original research and data base was supplemented and enriched throughout the year as relevant research studies and on-target articles were examined and summarized for easy use by ABE/GED practitioners.

### Moving in the WRITE Directions: Design Considerations

The WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors introduces GED practitioners to the theory and methods of holistic scoring. It presents holistic scoring/assessment as a potentially efficient and reliable way to assess student writing, a method that emphasizes what is right rather than what is wrong with a piece of writing. The project team stresses that holistic scoring exercises and activities can encourage the constructive evaluation of ABE/GED students' writing and generally help to strengthen ABE/GED instructional programs.

The Manual and in-service guide can help GED teachers to understand what makes a good writing/essay topic. Staff development exercises in the WRITE-Now products focus on the selection and use of topics which are of interest to both writers and readers. By presenting several examples of student writing in response to selected topics and by suggesting that GED staffs engage in holistic scoring practice activities, the project team hopes that instructors and program supervisors will see how they can use holistic scoring procedures to measure and contribute to their students' growth in writing ability.

### Some WRITE Directions Taken by the Manual and the Audio Cassette Tape

1. The project team advocates that GED teachers should set aside more

class time to respond on an intuitive basis to learners about their writing. Teachers should be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of each student at each stage of the writing process so that they, the teachers, can coach individual students in problem areas and point to progress as it occurs.

What is being evaluated will change throughout the writing process, with idea generation at one stage, organization at another, and grammar and mechanics at yet another. The student writers themselves, their peers, and their teachers should all participate in the evaluation process.

2. Rather than being viewed as an "add on," writing should be integrated into GED instruction.

From: NCTE Position Statement on Teaching Composition

"In the classroom where writing is especially valued, students should be guided through the writing process; encouraged to write for themselves and for other students, as well as for the teacher; and urged to make use of writing as a mode of learning, as well as a means of reporting on what has been learned. Teachers in all academic areas who have not been trained to teach writing may need help in transforming their classrooms into scenes for writing."

3. ABE/GED students should share their writing processes and their writing samples with one another. They must learn enough about writing to talk to each other about what is good and what is not good. By internalizing the criteria for quality in writing, they can acquire writing process skills that they can take away from the classroom to the world beyond school.

4. ABE/GED teachers should themselves be writers. By experiencing the struggles and joys of writing, teachers can learn that their students will need guidance and support throughout the writing process. Writing

teachers who write know that effective comments do not focus on pointing out errors. They know that encouraging revision can be a much more productive instructional task, a teaching practice that will help their students develop their ideas with greater clarity, honesty, and vigor.

5. Teachers should help their students prepare for both parts of the new Writing Skills Test by carefully examining and discussing pieces of actual writing submitted by their students for small-group and one-to-one analysis. This practice can and often should be supplemented by drill in and study of traditional texts and workbooks.

## WRITE-Now Field Testing Procedures

The project team used published essay topics and topics which they and their students had generated and sampled during late summer and early fall project activities. ABE/GED students participated in topic evaluation discussions and in peer support sessions.

After the project team had selected suitable topics and developed prompts with accompanying scoring rubrics, each team member field tested the essay topics in several ABE/GED classes and programs within the Lincoln Intermediate Unit No. 12. The team then met to read and study the essays which their students had written. Range-finder essays were selected, and the team holistically scored all of the student essays. When a variety of effective topics had been identified, the project team then turned to the task of writing up descriptions of WRITE-Now teaching techniques.

Team members continued to practice these WRITE-Now techniques during their fall and winter ABE/GED classes. They invited their students to talk about and write about their reactions to WRITE-Now activities. The project director-coordinator collected a second set of essay samples, lead the team in a second series of scoring exercises, and prepared another draft of an in-service training session that he had conducted for I.U. 12 ABE/GED teachers. With the ABE/GED supervisor's approval, the team field tested the WRITE-Now in-service materials and began to outline the main points to be presented on the audio cassette tape and in the "tips" sections of the manual. ABE/GED instructors who were not on the project team had an opportunity to critique successive versions of the staff development materials.

Location: The main project site was The Little House in York, PA. Other sites for project activities included the York Adult Learning Center, the I.U. central office, and GED classrooms throughout the I.U.

## Positive Results: Meeting the WRITE-Now Objectives

I. The project team did develop The WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors. This 200-page manual can be used by ABE/GED instructors as they attempt to help their students prepare for both the revised multiple choice portion of the new GED Writing Skills Test and the written essay component.

A. The WRITE-Now instructional techniques were field tested in a regular GED class and in an open entry-open exit individualized adult education program.

B. The manual was written and reproduced for distribution in Pennsylvania and beyond, as the supply lasts. It may also be borrowed from AdvancE in Harrisburg.

II. The project team did develop an in-service guide for GED supervisors and workshop facilitators to use in planning for and providing in-service training for ABE/GED practitioners.

A. By using recommended methods and materials during an in-service session for I.U. 12's ABE/GED instructors and during a major summer conference for ABE teachers and administrators, the project coordinator field tested the in-service guide.

B. The project team prepared copies of the in-service guide for use by GED supervisors, program administrators, and workshop facilitators in Pennsylvania and beyond.

III. The team prepared an audio cassette tape for GED supervisors, workshop facilitators, and ABE/GED instructors to use as part of staff development in the teaching of writing skills.

A. Part One(Side 1)of the tape is especially suitable for individual and small-group in-service training aimed at helping ABE/GED instructors to be more comfortable with process-conference techniques. Examples of student-teacher interactions have been and should be very valuable to practitioners.

B. Part Two(Side 2)of the audio cassette tape is directed more to GED supervisors and workshop facilitators for use before and during staff in-service training sessions on the teaching of writing in ABE/GED programs.

IV. GED practitioners were acquainted with the theory, methods, and uses of the holistic assessment of writing, including essay scoring procedures.

A. This objective was met mainly through the three products outlined above. See Chapter 9 of the manual.

B. Articles on the general topics of writing assessment and teaching writing in ABE programs were written and submitted to adult education and broader media for possible publication. These articles featured ideas for immediate(WRITE-Now) application.

1. The TABLET(see examples in manual)published a three-part article which was based on an introduction to the process-conference approach written by the project coordinator.

2. The ABE newsletter for Pennsylvania, What's the Buzz?, published the project team's invitation to ABE/GED practitioners to write and share their favorite teaching techniques for the WRITE-Now reasons.
3. The TABLET also published a Write-for-Life application dealing with writing for our rights as consumers and customers.
4. One of York's Sunday newspapers published an article about the WRITE-Now Project. See Chapter 16 of the manual.
5. With WRITE-Now project writing samples and notes on project classroom activities dealing with holistic assessment methods, the project team developed a teacher-researcher project for 1987-88. GED teachers will collect pre- and post-course essay samples and use holistic scoring activities in special demonstration situations.

V. The project coordinator submitted a workshop session proposal for consideration as a presentation during the 1987 Mid-Winter Adult Education Conference in Hershey, Pennsylvania. The proposal was accepted, and the coordinator teamed with Dr. Robert Weiss, Director of the Pennsylvania Writing Project, to give a panel-type information session on their two 310 projects. See Chapter 9 of the manual for more details on Dr. Weiss' project on holistic assessment procedures.

### A Not-So-Positive Result

During several workshop presentations and via approximately 100 written invitations, in addition to the published WRITE-Now invitations mentioned above, the project team asked ABE/GED practitioners to share their favorite teaching techniques and lessons dealing with the teaching of writing in ABE/GED programs. Despite what the team considered to be a very sincere and direct call for WRITE-Now support, only two programs sent materials and suggestions to the project coordinator. See Chapter 11 of the manual for more information about 1986-87 310 Project No. 98-7022, The Writing Wheel, a project conducted by our colleagues from Pennsylvania's Tuscarora Intermediate Unit.

Although we were disappointed with the results of our call for possible WRITE-Now materials, we suspect that such a request was simply a year too early for ABE/GED practitioners. Because we and some of our colleagues from other programs across Pennsylvania(see p. 94 of manual) had been encouraging our ABE/GED students to write long before we learned about the new GED tests, we were naturally eager to exchange ideas and to share what had worked for us. As part of our 1987-88 310 project, we plan to try again with a written invitation to ABE/GED instructors. We value their ideas and their suggestions.

Project Evaluation Activities:

The project team conducted weekly evaluation and progress review meetings during the project year. These self-assessment efforts were orally summarized by the project coordinator for presentation during monthly administrative meetings of members of the Lincoln Intermediate Unit's Federal/State team. Staff and student feedback during and after field testing were a necessary type of formative evaluation which the project team used to produce a more user-friendly manual, what we hope is a quality "product."

Written comments were collected from ABE/GED teachers who attended several project-related workshops and presentations. These teachers offered suggestions and asked for support materials,which were sent out in August and during the Fall 1986 ABE Workshop(PA)period.

Dr. William Kerr, 310 advisor from the PA Department of Education's Division of Adult Basic Education, conducted an on-site evaluation visit on March 4, 1987. See Appendix A for the I.U.'s response to Dr. Kerr's support visit.

## Evaluation from a WRITE-Now Class

We asked a class of WRITE-Now students to write on what they had learned about the writing process. We were especially interested in knowing more about their intentions for future writing assignments, personal writing projects, and writing courses. What were they more likely to do or what were they now doing in the WRITE directions?

* * * * * * * * * * *

Where I never really did a zero draft, I would do one now in an attempt to cluster and see where my feelings lead me.

James S.

I now find that I do more in reflection and/or selection areas when I have a subject in mind. Often this takes the form of random notes, written on whatever is handy, to be incorporated later into the more formal drafting process.

Charlene D.

Freewriting - what a great idea, to sit down and just write whatever comes into your head. So many new angles appear, new ways of looking at your topic.

Bret S.

I think I will do more on prevision than I've done before, thinking about the topic before the blank paper is in front of me. It makes it less stressful and gives me something to start with once I get out the paper.

Glenda B.

During my writing I feel that I am more conscious of what my reader will be trying to get out of what I have written.

Shawn O.

When writing a piece I tend to consider my topic with greater care. I now take the reader into consideration. I wonder how the piece will affect him or her.

Michele G.

This class has taught me a lot about revising, revising, and more revising. I read the paper out loud to myself several times to make sure things sound right.

Patti T.

I read my work to anyone who will listen. I try to curb the editor that seems ever-present. I will probably apply myself more seriously but try to enjoy the task.

Peggy H.

Because of our time together, I'm more likely to spend most of my time on revision. It's always been clear that the reader needs to understand what the writer has to say. Now I feel that breaking a piece apart and moving sentences, punctuation, and words can truly lead to a more "reader-friendly" composition.

Jean D.

I've learned that revising often takes a good paper and makes it better.

Bret S.

Revision, before this class, to me meant rereading for either spelling mistakes or typos. Now when I revise, I do so with the reader in mind and the flow of the piece. What is grammatically correct is not always the best sounding. Perhaps the point got lost under 200 flowery adjectives or submerged in fluff. I try to pull it out and make it comprehensible to someone besides myself.

Kristine B.

I feel that peer inquiry is important because you can read your work many times over and still not see what is wrong. Ask people you know to read it because they will know how to talk to you about what needs work.

Maggie B.

I know that I will definitely seek out others to read my writing. When I first started this class, I didn't want anyone to read my writing. Now I am very comfortable with it as a result of our group sharing.

I have also learned to do a lot of revising. When I draft a piece, I let it sit for a day. The next day I am able to critique it a lot easier. I enjoy doing all the revising and comparing it to my first draft.

Linda K.

Revision - again! I have always had a least a few changes when I've thought a piece was done - sometimes it took going back to it the next day.

Charlene D.

## Comments from a Valued WRITE-Now Colleague:

"I have just finished reading the comments on your sessions at our Paducah conference. Your presentations generated a lot of appreciative comments and a lot of requests. You were very kind to offer to respond. I don't quite know the significance of this, but having now read everyone's evaluations, I realize people wrote more to you. Interesting.

Thank you so much for coming to help us by sharing your experiences teaching writing long before the 1988 tests loomed on the horizon. Especially helpful was your advocation of writing across the curriculum. To me, using writing as a tool in learning all subjects is the only way we in adult education can hope to succeed in preparing our students."

Connie Ackerman, Program
Consultant, Division of Adult
and Community Education,
Kentucky Department of Education

## Some Comments by ABE/GED Instructors on the WRITE-Now "Products"

- "I couldn't stop reading the support article by Frank Smith which I found in your in-service guide. I plan to use your "myths" idea for a local in-service writing activity."
- "The student-instructor interactions on the audio cassette were really helpful. By working more with the conference questions and illustrations in the manual, I know I'll be more comfortable when I work with my own ABE/GED students."
- "Chapter 1 of the manual and the in-service questions in the guide(see Appendix B)were an excellent match for discussion during our recent small-group meeting in preparation for the new tests."
- "Floyd's Chapter was an inspiration to read. When I heard him on the tape, things really came together for me. Now I understand the directions my comments and questions should take."

## Practitioners' Comments(cont.)

- "I liked the idea of sharing a messy draft with students and asking for their constructive criticism(see Appendix C). Also exciting was the chapter on the journal keeping(Chapter 3)."
- "It is good to know that the project team members all have plenty of ABE/GED teaching experience. It was easy to see that they were very comfortable during the writing interactions."
- "We look forward to getting a copy of the WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors. Feel free to use what we have sent you(response to Open Letter, Appendix D)."
- "I saw the article in the paper about your writing project. It sounds like something good is happening(Appendix E)."
- "Our teachers talked a lot about the short chapter on a typical GED class. They began to see what they might be willing and able to do(Chapter 5)."

## The Ultimate Evaluation

If ABE/GED practitioners use and respond to the manual, guide, and tape in the next few years, then we'll know that we were on target when we decided that this kind of approach was needed(see p. 100 of manual).

## Procedure for Distribution of Project Report and Products

Copies of this report and the project's three products can be obtained from AdvancE(p. 144 of manual)at the PDE's Resource Center. Additional information can be obtained by contacting the project coordinator at 619 S. Edgar St., York, PA 17403.

Appendix A

**Lincoln Intermediate Unit No. 12**
P.O. BOX 70 • NEW OXFORD, PENNSYLVANIA 17350 (717) 624-4616

March 25, 1987

Dr. John Christopher, Chief
Division of Adult Basic Education
Bureau of Vocational and Adult Education
PA Department of Education
333 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

Dear Dr. Christopher:

We have received and studied your letter of March 12, 1987, which reviews Dr. William Kerr's visit to the site of George Rutledge's current 310 project. The commendations and recommendations resulting from Dr. Kerr's on-site evaluation visit of March 4, 1987, are appreciated by the team of 310 No. 99-7004, THE LINCOLN I.U.'S WRITE-NOW MANUAL FOR GED INSTRUCTORS. We are all expecting a series of products which adult education practitioners will find very useful as they help their students prepare for the new GED tests.

Concerning the first recommendation, we want to clarify the nature of the tape that George and his colleagues are producing. This tape will be an audio cassette tape (as described at the top of page four of the grant narrative). As you state, these samples of student-teacher interaction promise to be very useful products of this WRITE-NOW effort.

As has always been the case, we value the support and technical assistance your staff provides to I.U. 12's adult education programs.

Sincerely,

Don Burkins

Donald E. Burkins
Acting State and Federal Program Specialist

/sg

cc: George Rutledge
B1-9

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# SOME WRITE-NOW IN-SERVICE QUESTIONS

Appendix B

Generally speaking . . .

_____ Do you encourage your ABE/GED/ESL students to write about personal experiences?

_____ Do you give your students opportunities to review their written work?

_____ Do you keep a folder or file on each student for WRITE-Now and/or other purposes?

_____ Do you encourage your students to write at least a paragraph each time they do in-class writing?

_____ Do you encourage writing during class time?

_____ When you assign writing, do you give your students opportunities to discuss and clarify the assignment before they begin to write?

_____ Do you provide instruction in and encourage such pre-writing activities as brainstorming about a topic before your students write?

_____ Do you give students a chance to work on assignments over a period of a few days or weeks?

_____ Do you teach editing skills by showing your students how to combine sentences, eliminate unnecessary words and phrases, check for language variety, etc.?

_____ Do you give your students a chance to read their written work aloud to you, other students, and other instructors?

_____ Do you display or otherwise "publish" examples of student writing?

_____ Do you give your students specific suggestions for improving their in-process drafts?

_____ Do you help your students pick up some proofreading skills such as checking for punctuation errors, spelling errors, and glaring grammar errors? So much the better if you give them some editing/proofing symbols that they can adapt for their own purposes.

_____ Do you give assignments and support student choices of writing that is meant to be read by readers other than the instructor(s)?

## SOME IN-SERVICE QUESTIONS(cont.)

_____ Do you teach grammar,usage, and mechanics in relationship to your students' actual writing problems?

_____ Do you respond to student writing by occasionally writing positive comments on the students' papers?

_____ Do you sometimes work along with students on the same writing assignment or project?

_____ Do you have individual conferences with your students concerning their writing activities?

_____ Do you encourage your students to "peer edit" each others pieces before you respond to them?

_____ When you give assignments that will be evaluated in some way, do you give your students information about your scoring or grading(evaluative) criteria?

_____ Do you show your students how they can use writing to enhance their learning power across the curriculum?

********

These WRITE-Now in-service questions were adapted from Administering Writing Programs: A Workshop Leader's Handbook, The NETWORK, Inc., Andover, MA. John Collins, Ed.D. served as principal author and project director.

## Appendix C

Dear Project A.B.E. Student,

As you can see from the attached article about our WRITE-Now Project, it is time for ~~us~~ your instructors to do some writing. Since last summer we have been reading, thinking, and talking about the teaching of writing in adult education programs. We have asked you to write about many things. You have had an opportunity to work on your writing skills by participating in the activities of the WRITE-Now Club. Now it is time for us to collect the WRITE-Now Notebooks and other bits and pieces of writing that you and your fellow students have ~~contributed to~~ sent to the WRITE causes.

~~But~~, before we push the panic button on this special writing project, we want to invite you to ~~make~~ some last-minute contributions. Between now and July 10, 1987, we will consider whatever you care to share with us. We are especially interested in reading short pieces of writing which you have recently composed. If we like what you have done and you give us permission to put your writing in ~~our~~ the manual that we are ~~now~~ putting together, we'll try to ~~put~~ include something ~~by all of our students~~ [illegible] your contributions. Think about it - something you have written or helped to write might be read by students and teachers all across Pennsylvania and in other states.

If you want to make a last-minute contribution but do not have anything in mind, let us know. We have plenty of ideas and topics for you to consider. We would be very happy to receive all of the writing that you produded in the process of coming up with a final draft - your notes, your freewriting/rough drafts, and your revisions.

There are a lot of adult education teachers ~~out there~~ who are very much interested in what you are writing ~~and thinking~~ and what you are thinking about, the ~~forms~~ [illegible] of writing in and out of a schoøl setting.

P.S. - We will probably use your first name and the initial of your last name also to identify the student writers that we include in our manual. If you prefer, we'll just use your initials.

# AN OPEN LETTER

Dear Colleague:

**Because you are an ABE/GED teacher or an ABE supervisor, we would like to give you an opportunity to contribute to the development of one of the primary "products" of our current 310 project. The title of this staff development project, 1986-87 310 No. 99-7004, is "The Lincoln Intermediate Unit's WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors." Having attended several recent ABE workshops, in-service meetings, and conferences, we know that many ABE practitioners are interested in moving in the WRITE directions. We hope you are one of these very special instructors who has been encouraging your students to write in order to improve their learning, thinking, and communicating skills. Indeed, we hope you were a write-for-life advocate long before you learned that the new (1988) GED Writing Skills Test would include the composition of a short (200+ words) essay.**

We will be happy to receive brief descriptions/illustrations of writing activities and instructional techniques which you have been using with your ABE/GED students. The ideal submission (1-3 pp.) would identify the reading/writing level of the student(s), describe the instructional setting, and indicate the amount of in-class and out-of-class time required to complete the lesson or writing activity. Acutal samples of student writing (with student permission, of course) would be appreciated and might be very useful in this staff development effort.

We, the project team of WRITE-Now ABE/GED teachers, will study your submission with the intention of balancing what our experiences as teachers of writing in ABE/GED programs have taught us *with* the successful teaching practices which you, our colleague, are willing to share with us. We want our *WRITE-Now Manual* and our in-service program guide to be based on writing skills lessons and writing activities which ABE/GED practitioners have actually used with real ABE/GED students. We are also interested in knowing how you plan to modify some of your favorite instructional techniques as you get ready to help your students pass both parts of the new GED Writing Skills Test.

If we use your ideas or descriptions, we will acknowledge your WRITE-Now contribution in our manual and in our final report. In order to make the whole process as efficient as possible, we will receive your ideas and descriptions with the understanding that your submission means we have your permission to publish your contribution for 310 (non-profit) purposes. Although you are invited to send WRITE-Now suggestions to us anytime between now and May 15, 1987, the earlier the better so that we can review your writing activity/teaching method and possibly field-test it with our ABE/GED students this semester. Please include your full name, title, and the name and address of the institution which sponsors your local ABE/GED class(es).

Realizing that we are not the only ABE/GED teachers who have been doing the WRITE things in ABE/GED classrooms, we hope you or someone with whom you share this letter will join the WRITE-Now family by communicating with us in York, PA.

Moving WRITE Along,
George Rutledge
Carol Almeida
Vicki Rutledge

P.S. ABE teachers of advanced ESL students are encouraged to submit WRITE-Now descriptions.

Project A.B.E. - I.U. 12
The Little House
619 S. Edgar St.
York, PA 17403

TABLET

## The Checklist

*by Barbara S. Chandler*

The checklist! What a lovely thing!
Useless words it quickly flings!
Emotions from my heart it wrings,
And leaves me at a loss

Questions! Questions that cut me
down,
And puts my forehead in a frown,
While I sit feeling like a clown
With sentence fragments at a toss.

Are my sentences short and long?
Is my thesis statement strong?
Is the grammar right or wrong?
Do I know or only guess?

I labor on out of love,
Praying inspiration's dove
Will come winging from above,
My writer's soul to bless!

send
us
your
news

**TABLET**
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Clarksville, TN 37040

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Appendix E

B6 — THE SUNDAY NEWS, June 14, 1987

# Tougher GED exam means more work for students and teachers

YORK — This fall hundreds of adults will enroll in local Adult Basic Education programs. Many of them will begin preparation for the General Educational Development (GED) tests. For many of these adults who successfully complete the GED tests, their diplomas from the Pennsylvania Department of Education will be a big boost to their self-esteem.

Since the GED program began in the 1940s, GED candidates have taken five objective tests in writing skills, social studies, science, reading and math. These tests are each from one to one-and-one half hours in length. Now, as GED instructors organize their classes for this fall, they will face a new challenge: their GED students will have to take a writing skills test which has two parts instead of the present 80-item objective test. For the first time in GED history, those taking the exam will be asked to write on a specific topic, and they will have 45 minutes to plan, draft, revise and edit their essays.

During the past year three members of the Lincoln Intermediate Unit's Adult Basic Education staff have been encouraging their students to write for different purposes and audiences. George Rutledge, Carol Almeida and Vicki Rutledge have been examining their own teaching methods, studying textbooks on the teaching of writing at all levels, and collecting teaching strategies from other adult education teachers in Pennsylvania and across the country.

They have been conducting a project entitled "The WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors" because they want to make sure they will be ready to help their students pass the new GED tests.

George Rutledge, who coordinates the I.U.'s Project A.B.E. in York, thinks the new GED tests will be more difficult than the present tests. He believes that more GED candidates will need to enroll in preparation classes in order to improve their chances of passing the five GED tests. Instead of reading passages and answering questions which test simple recall of details and comprehension of main ideas, students will have to do more interpreting, analyzing and synthesizing of ideas and information. They'll have to do more critical thinking than candidates have been asked to do in the past, and their math tests will contain a higher percentage of algebra, geometry and data analysis items.

It is the essay requirement, however, which has the most adult education instructors anxious about the new GED tests, which will be administered in 1988. "Few adult education instructors feel comfortable about their ability to teach writing," Rutledge notes, "and many of us are worried about how much progress we can expect our students to make in their writing skills during the usual one or two semesters of GED preparation. We think we'll be ready to help our students prepare for the new tests. Most of us have known about the revisions for the last two years. We have been acquiring and studying new workbooks and textbooks on the teaching of writing, and we have been working on special staff development and demonstration projects."

Two years ago Rutledge and his colleagues put together an anthology of adult student writing by participants in Adult Basic Education programs throughout Pennsylvania. That project, which was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education's Clearinghouse on Adult Education for its promotion of adult writing skills, convinced the I.U.'s team that adults of any age can improve their writing skills. "Most of us," Rutledge adds, "don't look at writing as a way of finding out who we are and what we really know. We should look at writing as a tool for improving our students' learning and thinking power. We know that they can become better writers from a grammatical, mechanical, and syntactical view, and that's important. But how they feel about themselves as persons, as learners and communicators — as writers — that is the really important motivating factor for us. We are glad to see that an actual essay writing sample has been added to the GED tests. We have been trying to help our students im-

Sunday News/Tanya Wood

**Carol Almeida, George Rutledge and Vicki Rutledge, GED instructors, are shown outside "The Little House" on Eagar Street and Boundary Avenue.**

prove their writing skills for several years. Now we have a very significant message from the GED Testing Service of the American Council on Education — that writing skills are valued and will be tested."

The I.U. team has been talking with other adult education instructors across Pennsylvania, trying to collect and field-test recommended writing activities and teaching strategies. Now it's time for them to do a considerable amount of writing of their own. They have to produce a manual for other GED teachers to use in helping their students to become better writers. Along with the manual, they are contracted through the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Division of Adult Basic Education to produce an accompanying audio cassette tape and an in-service workshop guide.

Vicki Rutledge, who is the GED instructor at the I.U.'s Adult Learning Center in York, and Carol Almeida, who serves as an English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor for the I.U., have been supporting the WRITE-Now project by working with their students and meeting on a weekly basis to share their progress. Ms. Almeida notes that the manual which they will develop this summer will be distributed to adult education resource centers and to anyone who is interested in the team's work with A.B.E. students. "We have enjoyed the chance to be writing advocates with our students and with our adult education colleagues," she adds.

Looking to the future, Vicki Rutledge talked about a new project. "George will coordinate a project which will focus on the uses of modern poetry as a stimulus for adult student writing. Carol will continue to study the use of the dialogue journal in her ESL classes, and I will be collecting and responding to writing samples from our GED students.

Next summer these three instructors will have another opportunity to share their enthusiasm for the teaching of writing in adult education programs. They have already been notified that their project will be supported by a federal grant.

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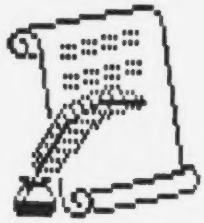
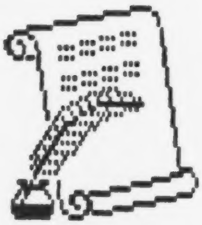


# In-Service Guide
# for
# The L.I.U.'s
# WRITE-Now Manual
# for
# GED Instructors



## In-Service Guide
## for
## The Lincoln I.U.'s

## WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors

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How to Use the Guide

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Alternative Workshop Topics

An In-Service Workshop Resource(Contemporary's Staff Development Videotape on GED Essay Writing)

Suggested Topics for a Five-Session In-Service Course

A Measurement of Writing Apprehension(The Daly-Miller Test)

Using Frank Smith's "Myths of Writing"

A 1978 Abstract - Even More Relevant Today!

Some WRITE-Now In-Service Questions

A WRITE-Now Questionnaire for ABE/GED Instructors

Article - Smith's "Myths of Writing"

Article - Taylor's "Teaching Writing in the GED Program"

Excerpts from Strong's "An I - Search Perspective on Language/Composition Research"

Some Practical Ideas for Teaching Organization in Writing

An Introduction to Clustering

Two Writing Process Models

Some Writing-for-Learning Questions and Answers

A Swimming Lesson for ABE/GED Instructors

Writing Conferences with Kim

Some Recommended Resources for ABE/GED Instructors

## HOW TO USE THE CONTENTS OF OUR IN-SERVICE WORKSHOP GUIDE

- Be flexible for the right reasons. Yes, we spelled it right just to prove that even we have a sense of when to move on for the right reasons. We deliberately left the pages in this guide unnumbered so that workshop facilitators could move materials around in order to fit local situations.

- Read all of the articles in advance so that you will be able to lead workshop participants back to and through key passages and selections which appear to meet their needs-or at least get them to start thinking about what they should be doing to improve ABE/GED student writing in their classrooms.

- We urge you to include short writing exercises in all of your workshops. Even if you only have time to do a one-hour introductory workshop, get all of the participants into some kind of non-threatening writing activity.

- Write along with the participants during workshop writing exercises. By sharing your own freewriting or initial drafts or journal entries or whatever writing you have done for WRITE-Now purposes, you will probably be rewarded with contributions from workshop participants. Keep sharing time in mind when you plan your local workshop(s).

- If you have the time and resources to do so, think about sending or giving pre-workshop reading materials to the prospective participants. We highly recommend articles such as Karl Taylor's "Teaching Writing in the GED Program" and William Strong's "An I-Search Perspective on Language/Composition Research." If you can't share such articles with participants ahead of time, make sure you take a few minutes to refer to them and explain why they might be good support articles for ABE/GED practitioners. We have given our reasons in the guide and manual.

- Study the sample formats which follow, and then develop your own outline/agenda.

# In-Service Program Guide for the L.I.U.'s WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors

## Suggested Format for a One-Hour Staff Development Workshop

### Workshop Goals

1. To introduce participants to the new(1988)GED Writing Skills Test, Parts I and II.
2. To get ABE/GED instructors thinking about how they will start to get themselves and their students ready for the new GED tests.

### Materials Needed

The WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors

The WRITE-Now Audio Cassette Tape

Pencils, pens, and lined composition paper for writing activities

A copy of The 1988 Tests of General Educational Development: A Preview (prepared by the staff of the GED Testing Service)

I. Introductions of Staff and Participants (five mins.)

II. Preview Part I of new Writing Skills Test(ten-fifteen mins.)

Take participants through relevant sections in A Preview or refer to Chapter 8 of WRITE-Now Manual.

Begin by reading sample paragraph on computer programs. Have participants respond orally to the nine sample items. Stress the editing/proofreading nature of Part I. Argue that this important test revision makes good sense by connecting with both real-life and Part II writing demands.

III. Preview Part II - The Essay Writing Component (fifteen-twenty mins.)

Examine holistic scoring guide in A Preview or White's similar six-point rubric in Chapter 9 of WRITE-Now Manual.

One-Hour Workshop Format(cont.)

Go over sample essays in A Preview. Give participants time to read and score each essay. Turn to GEDTS discussion of how the essays were scored. Highlight GEDTS article on holistic scoring procedures in Chapter 9 of WRITE-Now Manual.

IV. A Pre-writing "writing" activity (five-ten mins.)

Go back to the sample essay topic. Ask participants to spend 5-7 minutes thinking about, outlining, clustering, listing, or freewriting on the topic.

Lead a brief discussion on the importance of planning and organization in preparation for writing a 200-300 word essay. Stress the importance of demonstrating/teaching pre-writing techniques for GED candidates.

V. Turn to Chapter 5 of the WRITE-Now Manual. Go over the GED class illustration. (five-ten mins.)

Preview the many ABE/GED student writing samples in the WRITE-Now Manual and turn to Chapter 3 for a few examples on the topic of collecting writing samples.

VI. General Motivation for Writing (ten-fifteen mins.)

Play first part of audio cassette tape(Side 1 - A Pep Talk).

Possible assignment = focused freewriting on "What I Believe About the Teaching of Writing in ABE/GED Programs."

Follow-up = Read Chapter 1 of WRITE-Now Manual.

Note: Some workshop leaders might wish to have the participants try their pre-writing on the sample essay topic before they have a chance to read and score the sample essays. We wanted the participants to have an opportunity to see some student-written essays before they were asked to do the pre-writing exercise.

## Workshop Format for 1½-hour Session:

Add, near the beginning of the workshop, a writing and sharing activity on Smith's "Myths." See the discussion and handout suggestion in this guide.

Add, as part of the pre-writing activity, a demonstration of clustering. Do on chalkboard, with participant support. Preferably do this before asking participants to pre-write/cluster in preparation for practice essays. See illustration in this guide on clustering.

## Possible Format Expansions for a Two-Hour Workshop:

As part of Writing Skills Test-Part I preview, illustrate the procedure for one-on-one errors analysis work. Make clear the WRITE-Now connection with Part II criteria(evaluative).

Under Part II preview, turn to Chapter 9 of WRITE-Now Manual for two illustrations, following White's article, on how to introduce and use holistic scoring in ABE/GED classes.

*******

Note: The additional goal for both of the above expanded formats would be to give ABE/GED practitioners exercises and techniques they can start using almost immediately in their classes.

## TWO DESCRIPTIONS OF ACTUAL WORKSHOPS GIVEN BY WRITE-NOW COORDINATOR

As a very special part of my 1986-87 WRITE-NOW project duties, I took a 24-hour bus trip to Paducah, Kentucky, where I had the opportunity to give two workshops on the teaching of writing in ABE/GED programs. On the afternoon of the first day of The 1986 Summer GED/Writing Skills Conference, my topic was "An Introduction to the Writing Process: Adopting a Write-for-Life Approach in ABE/GED Programs." My topic for the next day was "Writing Across the Curriculum in ABE/GED Programs: Personal Connections and Partnerships." Both workshop sessions were well received, with participants asking for additional materials and sharing their favorite instructional techniques.

Both of the outlines and descriptions which follow were the basic structures which I used for expanding and revising for longer workshops (2½ - 3 hours)which I gave and/or planned. The Kentucky workshops were about 1½ hours each.

Prospective writing workshop facilitators can see how I adapted/adopted WRITE-NOW and Write-for-Life materials for these two very enjoyable in-service summer presentations.

*******

## A DESCRIPTION OF A HALF-DAY WORKSHOP ON WAC TECHNIQUES

The description which follows the two one-hour format outlines was designed for an ABE in-service workshop involving ABE/GED instructors and program directors from several different sites. Most of the workshop participants had attended shorter local or regional workshops which served as introductions to the 1988 GED tests, the writing process, and the holistic assessment of essay samples.

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WRITING PROCESS:
# ADOPTING A WRITE-FOR-LIFE APPROACH IN ABE/GED PROGRAMS

George E. Rutledge

1986 Summer G.E.D./Writing Skills Conference

## Workshop Outline

I. Write-for-Life Techniques

  A. Teacher Attitudes and Traditional Practices

    1. Writing Apprehension

      a. The Daly-Miller Test

      b. Dealing with Writing Apprehension

    2. What the Authorities Tell Us

  B. The Process Approach: A Description

    1. The Writing Process

      a. Prewriting

      b. Exploratory Writing(a short writing activity on How I Write)

      c. Developmental Writing

    2. Getting Started in the WRITE Directions

      a. Higher Order Concerns

      b. Lower Order Concerns

      c. Conference Questions and Suggestions

    3. A Transactional/Expressive Writing Activity

      a. Focused Freewriting Exercise

      b. Sharing/Responding(possible discussion of pre-conference essay)

  C. Creating a Write-for-Life ABE/GED Classroom

1. Working in the Comfort Zone
2. Moods and Modes
    a. Expressive
    b. Transactional
    c. Poetic
3. Balancing the Basics

II. Writing Across the Curriculum
  A. Learning-centered Writing
    1. Learning Logs
    2. Journals
  B. A Process Approach to Writing for Learning
    1. An Illustration of a Learning-centered Writing Activity
    2. A Learning-Centered Writing Exercise
      a. Recall of Concepts and Procedures
      b. Sharing and Caring

III. Publishing Student Writing
  1. Local efforts
  2. Our Words, Our Voices, Our Worlds

IV. Handouts and Resource Suggestions for the WRITE Causes

V. A Summary - Myths and the WRITE Stuff
  A. Participant Contributions
  B. Question-Answer Period
  C. Feedback/Evaluation

*************

A Workshop Description

During the first part of this workshop designed for ABE/GED practitioners and other adult educators interested in the teaching of writing, the workshop facilitator will describe and demonstrate the process approach to writing instruction. Participants will engage in a brief non-threatening writing exercise, which will be followed by a sharing and response activity.

The second part of this ABE/GED staff development workshop will focus on the description and illustration of learning logs and other kinds of learning-centered writing experiences which ABE/GED instructors can use to improve their students' learning/thinking and writing skills.

Participants will be encouraged to think about, talk about, and write about the teaching of writing in ABE/GED classes. The primary workshop methods will be description and demonstration, with non-threatening writing activities employed to keep participants actively engaged in the actual practices and instructional techniques of a Write-for-Life(process-oriented) adult education classroom. The presenter will describe all handouts so that teachers can make use of them by way of review and direct application in their ABE/GED programs.

# WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM IN ABE/GED PROGRAMS:
# PERSONAL CONNECTIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

George E. Rutledge

1986 Summer G.E.D./Writing Conference - KY

I. Introduction to WAC

   A. Writing Program Assessment Instrument

   B. Writing-for-Learning Quotation(a possible pre-writing activity)

II. A Process Approach to Writing for Learning

   A. Prevision Experience

   B. Reflection

   C. Selection

   D. Zero Draft

   E. First Draft

   F. Peer Inquiry

   G. Revision

   H. Teacher Inquiry

   I. Revision - Again!

   J. Evaluation/Publication

III. Two Extensive Illustrations

   A. The Writing Process at Work in Consumerism

   B. The Writing Process at Work in Home Economics

IV. A WAC Philosophy for Adult Education

   A. Action-Learning Strategy

   B. Teacher as Writer

V. Using Journals in ABE/GED Classes

VI. Writing to Accomplish Instructional Goals

VII. Publication as a Voice for Student Writing

VIII. Summary Exercise

  A. Handout Review

  B. Resource Sharing

  C. Feedback - WRITE Now!

************

Workshop Description - Writing Across the Curriculum in ABE/GED Programs

For this workshop, designed to acquaint adult education practitioners with proven techniques for improving student writing and learning power across the curriculum, the presenter will demonstrate a process-oriented instructional strategy by engaging participants in some brief writing activities. In addition to examples of student growth from his own adult(ABE/GED)students, the presenter will share recent studies and publications on the teaching of writing skills in a variety of secondary and adult education programs.

Participants will be encouraged to ask questions and to share their successful WAC teaching practices.

# WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM IN ABE/GED PROGRAMS: PERSONAL CONNECTIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

## DESCRIPTION:

For this workshop, designed to acquaint adult education practitioners with proven techniques for improving student writing and learning power across the curriculum, the presenter will demonstrate a process-oriented instructional strategy by engaging participants in some brief writing activities.

The presenter will begin the workshop with a review, through description and demonstration, of the process approach to the teaching of writing in ABE/GED programs. A practical and non-threatening writing exercise will be followed by a sharing and response activity.

The second part of this ABE/GED staff development workshop will focus on the presentation and illustration of learning logs, dialogue journals, and other kinds of learning-centered writing experiences which ABE/GED instructors can use to help their students become better thinkers and writers. In addition to writing samples from his own ABE/GED students, the presenter will share information about recent studies and publications dealing with writing across the curriculum(WAC).

Participants will be encouraged to ask questions and to share their successful WAC teaching practices. All handouts will be described so that participants will be more likely than not to read them and use them in their ABE/GED programs.

## Objectives for WAC Workshop

1.) Define Writing Across the Curriculum(WAC) and, through discussion with participants, place early emphasis on formative writing activities.

2.) Review basics of the process-conference method of teaching writing in ABE/GED programs.

3.) Illustrate the use of learning log, dialogue journal, and freewriting entries in writing notebooks and folders.

4.) Provide participants with at least two WAC classroom activities in each GED subject area(Writing Skills, Social Studies, Science, Interpreting Literature and the Arts-Reading, and Mathematics).

5.) Share examples of ABE/GED instructor writing and explain how reflecting on and sharing that writing experience can help motivate and enlighten both students and staff.

6.) Demonstrate how these WAC techniques can be adapted for use in small-group and in individualized ABE programs.

## METHOD:

In order to stimulate the thinking of participants and encourage them to focus on their present and potential applications of WAC ideas and techniques, brief writing activities, sharing-response discussion sessions, and frequent illustration and demonstration by the presenter of WAC methods in action will be the primary workshop strategies.

Participants will be encouraged to think about, talk about, and write about the teaching and uses of writing across the ABE/GED curriculum. The presenter, aware that ABE practitioners should receive ideas, information, and materials which they can use in

METHOD(cont.):

their own classrooms, will be careful to balance the presentation of andragogical theory with the sharing of WAC methods and activities which appear to be working successfully in ABE programs.

TIP FOR WORKSHOP LEADERS:

We suggest that you prepare short outlines and descriptions to go along with whatever handouts and materials that you give to workshop participants. If you have the time and energy, you can use condensed versions of the descriptions and outlines for PR and pre-workshop distributions to prospective attendees.

In planning for local workshops with other ABE/GED practitioners, you might want to narrow the focus of each workshop in order to meet the specific perceived needs of participants. The list which follows on the next page represents one WRITE-NOW instructor's attempt to anticipate the kinds of workshop topics that ABE/GED practitioners might be interested in exploring.

The Teaching of Writing in ABE/GED Programs

A Write-for-Life Approach

The Process-Conference Method

Publishing Adult Student Writing

Preparing GED Students to Write Short Essays

Holistic Scoring Information for the GED Instructor

Writing Across the Curriculum in ABE/GED Programs

Responding to ABE/GED Student Writing

ABE/GED Practitioners as Writers

Writing Instruction/Tutoring in Basic Literacy/ABE Programs

Preparing GED Students for Both Parts of the Writing Skills Test

Literature Training for ABE/GED Teachers: Transactions in Reading and Writing

Note: Even a quick study of the topics listed above will lead the reader to see that there is very deliberate overlapping of methods and applications. I have already given workshops and more formal presentations on most of these topics. What I am excited about doing in these 1987-88 Mini-Workshops is adapting and structuring what I have done to meet the specific interests and needs of local ABE/GED practitioners. I am eager to plan for particular groups in particular situations. If contracted by PDE to give one or more mini-workshops, I plan to contact the local ABE/GED supervisor in order to develop a workshop for that very specific group of tutors/teachers.

# AN IN-SERVICE WORKSHOP RESOURCE FOR THOSE PLANNING TO USE CONTEMPORARY'S GED STAFF DEVELOPMENT VIDEOTAPE, "THE GED WRITING SAMPLE: HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE TEST"

In "The Writing Program Viewer's Guide" designed to accompany their GED Staff Development Videotape Series, the very capable editors and producers at Contemporary Books, Inc. have included a major section on materials and ideas for developing and conducting in-service workshops. Under "Trainer's Notes," they offer a workshop outline which includes a viewing and discussion of the videotape, "The GED Writing Sample: How to Prepare for the Test." The workshop as outlined should last between two and three hours.

Because we were fortunate enough to take part in the development process for the videotapes and guides, we had an opportunity to preview and react to the videotape recommended for this kind of workshop.

We also had a chance to view and react to two other new staff development videotapes, "The Process of Writing: What Works for Teachers and Students" and "The New GED Tests: An Overview for 1988-98." We hope that ABE/GED program directors will be able to borrow or purchase these staff development resources so that teachers and tutors and program administrators will have access to them.

In Pennsylvania, these videotapes may be previewed - not copied - by making arrangements with the staff at AdvancE, the PDE Resource Center, 11th floor, 333 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333. We suggest that our colleagues in other states contact their state ABE administrators or resource specialists for information about the above and other on-target WRITE-NOW kinds of workshop materials.

## Suggested Topics for Five-Session In-Service Course*

Following an essay by R.D. Walshe("What's Basic to Teaching Writing?" in English Journal, December of 1979) the focus for each unit or "basic" will be developed as follows:

### First Basic - The Teacher Values Writing

There has to be an enthusiasm for writing. That means a teacher who continually "sells" writing to his or her classes, who knows compelling arguments for the importance of writing in today's society, and who makes an event of most occasions for writing.

### Second Basic - The Teacher Values the Learner-Writer

Along with valuing writing must go, no less obviously, the valuing of the learner-writers who are our students.

### Third Basic - The Teacher Encourages Pleasure in Reading

The teacher of writing is necessarily also a teacher of reading. Writing and reading, so often treated quite separately, need to be seen for what they are--the two sides of the same coin, the coin of literacy.

### Fourth Basic - The Teacher Makes Use of Insights Into How Writing Happens

To see writing as a process rather than a one-shot act is to realize that good writing is a product of successive efforts to clarify one's thinking in order to persuade an audience.

### Fifth Basic - The Teacher Fosters Self-Editing

As part of the writing process, "self-editing" scarcely merits listing separately from the previous "basics," but two good current reasons justify doing so. The editing stage can be used effectively for cultivating those mechanical skills of writing which the back-to-basics people say are being neglected. Even more important, it is a stage that has been a good deal of recent experiment from which the outline of a radically improved classroom practice is emerging - one that cannot only strengthen students' handling of the mechanics as never before but also strenghten their whole writing performance. (A sample lesson is attached).

Method and the criteria used in evaluation of the competency achieved by the participants:

Pre-to-post comparisions will be made between (1) participants' statements written at the beginning of the inservice course and (2) their oral and written statements resulting from course activities related to skills in teaching writing, personal writing skills and attitudes, and curriculum materials to support classroom activities.

Pre-to-post comparisions will be made between inservice course participants' responses to a survey dealing with teachers' perceptions of needs concerning the teaching and learning of written composition skills.

OF LESSON PLANS FOR WRITING FOR ABE/GED TEACHERS
INSERVICE COURSE OFFERED THROUGH L.I.U. NO. 12

Instructor: George E. Rutledge, ABE/GED Instructor and former
Coordinator of the L.I.U./Penn State Writing Project

## FIRST SESSION

### I. INTRODUCTION TO WRITING FOR TEACHERS

A. Discussion(Teachers who write are better teachers of writing!) - 30 minutes

B. Distribute, highlight, and assign Walshe's "What's Basic to Teaching Writing?" - 15 minutes

C. Writing Experience No. 1(from Bernhardt's Just Writing) - 20 minutes

D. Discussion - "Into the Comfort Zone" - 20 minutes

BREAK - 5 minutes

### II. INCREASING STUDENTS'(AND TEACHERS') MOTIVATION TO READ AND WRITE

A. Debate(Instructor vs. teachers)on Why Write? - 20 minutes

B. The Commitment a' la Elbow(Introduction to Free Writing) - 30 minutes

C. Writing Experience No. 2(Free Writing) - 15 minutes

D. Review of PA Writing Project's and Elbow's "Sharing" rules - 20 minutes

BREAK - 5 minutes

### III. AN INTRODUCTION TO PROCESS-CONFERENCE TECHNIQUES

A. Videotape - Donald Graves et al/PDE - 30 minutes

B. Some activities and suggestions for early weeks of ABE/GED classes - 30 minutes

LUNCH

## FIRST SESSION(cont.)

IV. WRITING TEACHERS/TUTORS

A. Developing a Learning Plan for Improving Writing Skills: Some Personal Goals and Objectives - 30 minutes

B. Writing Experience No. 3(Free Writing with Focus) - 20 minutes

V. ASSIGNMENT - Richard Ulin's article,"Equivalent to What? GED High School Equivalency Tests" - 10 minutes

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*Ideally speaking, it would be great to have a series of in-service meetings over a period of a month or two. Participants would have a chance to read, write, and "field test" writing exercises and WRITE-Now techniques between in-service sessions. If the workshop facilitator is readily available and an experienced teacher of writing in ABE/GED classes, the participants would be able to benefit in many ways by such an arrangement. A one-credit in-service course, "Writing for ABE/GED Teachers," was conducted in I.U. 12 a few years ago. More information can be obtained by contacting George Rutledge.

## A Measurement of Writing Apprehension: The Daly-Miller Test

One possible in-service workshop activity, especially if you have a feeling that most of the prospective participants do not do much writing themselves, could focus on the administration and discussion of The Daly-Miller Test. We have used Michael Smith's version with ABE/GED instructors and with students.

Although it means more work for you or your assistants, you might want to remove the positive and negative signs from the left side of the measure and the explanation on grading The Daly-Miller Test. We have found that workshop participants are usually able to score their own measurements if you carefully go over the scoring process by putting an example on the chalkboard.

We suggest this activity for early-on , hands-on situations. It is a good exercise for helping to establish a comfort zone for later sharing-caring activities.

## Measurement of Writing Apprehension (The Daly-Miller Test)

Below is a series of statements about writing. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by circling the number that shows whether you strongly agree, agree, are uncertain, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement. While some of these statements may be repetitious, please respond to all of them; take your time and try to be as honest as possible. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

| | strongly agree | agree | uncertain | disagree | strongly disagree | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| + | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1. I avoid writing. |
| − | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 2. I have no fear of my writing's being evaluated. |
| − | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 3. I look forward to writing down my ideas. |
| + | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 4. I am afraid of writing essays when I know they will be evaluated. |
| + | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 5. Taking a composition course is a very frightening experience. |
| − | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6. Handing in a composition makes me feel good. |
| + | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 7. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on my composition. |
| + | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 8. Expressing ideas through writing seems to be a waste of time. |
| − | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9. I would enjoy submitting my writing to magazines for evaluation and publication. |
| − | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 10. I like to write down my ideas. |
| − | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 11. I feel confident in my ability to express my ideas clearly in writing. |
| − | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 12. I like to have my friends read what I have written. |
| + | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 13. I'm nervous about writing. |
| − | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 14. People seem to enjoy what I write. |
| − | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 15. I enjoy writing. |
| + | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 16. I never seem to be able to write down my ideas clearly. |
| − | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 17. Writing is a lot of fun. |
| + | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 18. I expect to do poorly in composition classes even before I enter them. |
| − | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 19. I like seeing my thoughts on paper. |
| − | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 20. Discussing my writing with others is an enjoyable experience. |
| + | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 21. I have a terrible time organizing my ideas in a composition course. |
| + | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 22. When I hand in a composition, I know I'm going to do poorly. |
| − | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 23. It's easy for me to write good compositions. |
| + | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 24. I don't think I write as well as most other people. |
| + | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 25. I don't like my compositions to be evaluated. |
| + | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 26. I'm not good at writing. |

Measurement of Writing Apprehension (The Daly-Miller Test).

### Grading the Daly-Miller Test

The response "strongly agree" has a value of one. If a student strongly agrees with statement 1, a positive statement, add one point to his or her score. The response "strongly disagree" has a value of five. If a student strongly disagrees with statement 2, a negative statement, subtract five points from his or her score. The other responses have the following values: agree, two; uncertain, three; disagree, four. If a student makes one of these responses, add or subtract the appropriate value. To determine whether to add or subtract, simply check the symbol opposite each statement. Writing Apprehension = 78 + positive statement scores − negative statement scores. Scores may range from a low of 26(an extremely apprehensive writer) to a high of 130(a very confident writer).

Adapted from: Smith, Michael W. Reducing Writing Apprehension. Urbana, Illinois: NCTE/ERIC, 1984.

# SUMMARY OF FRANK SMITH'S MYTHS OF WRITING*

## Myths about the Nature of Writing

1. Writing is for the transmission of information.
2. Writing is for communication.
3. Writing involves transferring thoughts from the mind to paper.
4. Writing is permanent, speech ephemeral.
5. Writing is a linear, left-to-right process.
6. Writing is speech plus handwriting, spelling and punctuation.
7. A writer is a special kind of person.

## Myths about How Writing is Learned

8. Learning to write precedes writing.
9. Writing is learned from instruction.
10. Writing is learned by writing.
11. Most classrooms are reasonable places in which to expect(students) to learn to write.

## Myths about the Act of Writing

12. You must have something to say in order to write.
13. Writing should be easy.
14. Writing should be right the first time.
15. Writing can be done to order.
16. A fixed period of "prewriting" can or should be distinguishable before any writing act.
17. Writing is a sedentary activity.
18. Writing is a silent activity.
19. Writing is a solitary activity.
20. Writing is a tidy activity.
21. Writing should be the same for everyone.

## The Grand Myth about Who Can Teach Writing

22. People who do not themselves enjoy and practice writing can teach others how to write.

## USING SMITH'S MYTHS DURING AN ABE/GED STAFF IN-SERVICE WORKSHOP

Whenever I give a workshop which has been designed to introduce ABE/GED practitioners to the writing process, I try to include a short writing and sharing activity based upon "Myths of Writing," an excellent article by Frank Smith. I either read the myths aloud to the participants or give them a list similar to the one I have prepared for the WRITE-Now Manual for GED Instructors.

I ask the participants to select any one of the myths, think about their choices, and then write a paragraph or two in response to their selected myths. If they wish to do so, they can write about why they feel the statement is not a myth. Most choose to counter or refute one of the myths. By far the most popular myth which workshop participants have attacked so far is the one about a writer being a special kind of person. Once in a great while, a participant will take exception to the last myth, The Grand Myth. When this happens near the beginning of a workshop, I advance my views and let others comment. When it happens near the end of a workshop, I usually don't have to say anything because other participants will come forward with enthusiastic WRITE-Now explanations.

When I sense that participants have had enough time to write and review their responses, I call for volunteers to read their one-draft shots at the myths. Their quickly written reactions are typically valid and encouraging, with one response bringing out another. On a few occasions all of the workshop participants have volunteered to read their writing and/or to comment on the writing of a fellow participant.

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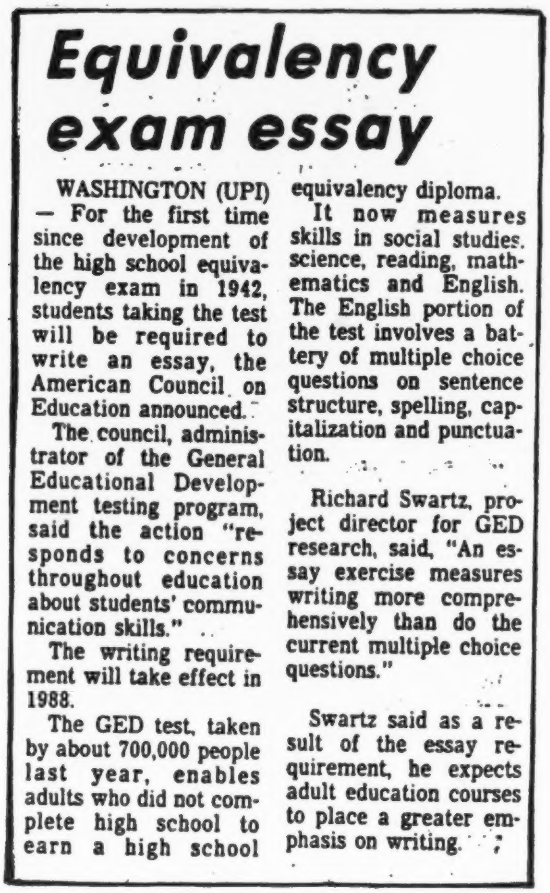
*From: "Myths of Writing," Language Arts, October 1981.



# Equivalency exam essay

WASHINGTON (UPI) — For the first time since development of the high school equivalency exam in 1942, students taking the test will be required to write an essay, the American Council on Education announced.

The council, administrator of the General Educational Development testing program, said the action "responds to concerns throughout education about students' communication skills."

The writing requirement will take effect in 1988.

The GED test, taken by about 700,000 people last year, enables adults who did not complete high school to earn a high school equivalency diploma.

It now measures skills in social studies, science, reading, mathematics and English. The English portion of the test involves a battery of multiple choice questions on sentence structure, spelling, capitalization and punctuation.

Richard Swartz, project director for GED research, said, "An essay exercise measures writing more comprehensively than do the current multiple choice questions."

Swartz said as a result of the essay requirement, he expects adult education courses to place a greater emphasis on writing.

# AN ABSTRACT FROM A 1978 STUDY OF INTEREST TO WRITE-NOW ADVOCATES IN 1988 AND BEYOND

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| | |
|---|---|
| AUTHOR | McKeag, Robert A. |
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ABSTRACT

Because of recent public demand that English teachers teach students basic writing skills to prepare them for employment, a study was conducted in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, to determine what kinds of writing skills employers require of their workers. One hundred and sixty-four employers of the Association of Manufacturers and Commerce were sent a listing of 27 writing skills and were asked to check whether "some," "much," or "little" competency was desired in each skill area. The skill areas fell into three categories: composition, punctuation, and word usage. The results indicated a great deal of demand for writing skills in the composition area, although footnoting, writing from an outline, outlining, and rewriting were not highly desired skills. Employers seemed to agree that punctuation skills were also desirable. The word usage category included spelling and vocabulary, and employers wanted "much" competency in this area as well. Overall the results indicated that writing skills are important for getting and keeping a job. (HTH)

**WRITE-NOW TEAM COMMENT:** When we read this research summary several years ago, we were eager to use it in our ABE employment-oriented curriculum development. Now, ten years later, we think McKeag's conclusions are even more accurate. We strongly suspect that the so-so demand that employers indicated for rewriting skills was due to the nature of the writing tasks that most employees/workers needed to do at the time. With word processing and other kinds of language generation technology making it likely that most jobs will be upgraded in terms of workers' literacy skills of all kinds, this is the WRITE time to look at on-the-job reading and writing connections we can make in our ABE programs.

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# SOME WRITE-NOW IN-SERVICE QUESTIONS

Generally speaking . . .

_____ Do you encourage your ABE/GED/ESL students to write about personal experiences?

_____ Do you give your students opportunities to review their written work?

_____ Do you keep a folder or file on each student for WRITE-Now and/or other purposes?

_____ Do you encourage your students to write at least a paragraph each time they do in-class writing?

_____ Do you encourage writing during class time?

_____ When you assign writing, do you give your students opportunities to discuss and clarify the assignment before they begin to write?

_____ Do you provide instruction in and encourage such pre-writing activities as brainstorming about a topic before your students write?

_____ Do you give students a chance to work on assignments over a period of a few days or weeks?

_____ Do you teach editing skills by showing your students how to combine sentences, eliminate unnecessary words and phrases, check for language variety, etc.?

_____ Do you give your students a chance to read their written work aloud to you, other students, and other instructors?

_____ Do you display or otherwise "publish" examples of student writing?

_____ Do you give your students specific suggestions for improving their in-process drafts?

_____ Do you help your students pick up some proofreading skills such as checking for punctuation errors, spelling errors, and glaring grammar errors? So much the better if you give them some editing/proofing symbols that they can adapt for their own purposes.

_____ Do you give assignments and support student choices of writing that is meant to be read by readers other than the instructor(s)?

SOME IN-SERVICE QUESTIONS(cont.)

____ Do you teach grammar,usage, and mechanics in relationship to your students' actual writing problems?

____ Do you respond to student writing by occasionally writing positive comments on the students' papers?

____ Do you sometimes work along with students on the same writing assignment or project?

____ Do you have individual conferences with your students concerning their writing activities?

____ Do you encourage your students to "peer edit" each others pieces before you respond to them?

____ When you give assignments that will be evaluated in some way, do you give your students information about your scoring or grading(evaluative) criteria?

____ Do you show your students how they can use writing to enhance their learning power across the curriculum?

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These WRITE-Now in-service questions were adapted from Administering Writing Programs: A Workshop Leader's Handbook, The NETWORK, Inc., Andover, MA. John Collins, Ed.D. served as principal author and project director.

## A WRITE-NOW QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ABE/GED INSTRUCTORS*

1. Is there a special place you like to write?
   - a particular room?
   - on a table, on your lap. . . ?
   - what kind of light do you usually have?
2. Does background noise help or hinder you?
   - what kind(music, voices, T.V., traffic, wind. . .)
3. Do you eat or drink or nibble(snacks, gum, pencils)while you write?
4. Are there special clothes you like to wear(or not wear)when you write?
5. How do you prepare to write? Do you sharpen ten pencils or stare out the window. . . ?
6. Do you procrastinate before beginning a writing project? Does this eventually help or hurt your final product?
7. When do you like to write -- in the morning, afternoon, evening, late night -- and why?
8. How do you get yourself started? What are some of your sources of inspiration?
9. How do you generate ideas? Do you write in a journal, make lists, freewrite, talk with others, prepare outlines, ask questions, use a tape recorder?
10. Do you write your first draft in bits and pieces or fly all the way through in one sitting?
11. When you write, do you have nervous mannerisms such as swinging your foot or tapping your pencil?
12. When is it helpful to have others help you with your writing? How does this work best for you?

## WRITE-NOW QUESTIONNAIRE(cont.)

13. Are you bothered or comforted by having other people around you while you are working(writing)?

14. What time period between drafts is most useful for you? How do you revise a paper? Do you circle parts and draw arrows, cut and tape. . . ?

15. How do you edit? How do you seek out and correct mechanical errors such as punctuation, spelling, subject-verb agreement, and sentence structure?

16. Are there particular aspects of writing that are worrisome to you? What do you do about them?

17. Do you have any special techniques for improving your vocabulary?

18. Is writing physically uncomfortable or soothing to you? Do you get writer's cramp when copying a final draft?

19. Do you like to write? Why or why not?

20. Do you have any suggestions for additional questionnaire items?

Thoughtfully fill out the above questionnaire, consider your answers, and then write a short essay(at least 200 words, right?)about 1.) how you prepare to write, 2.) how you write, 3.) how you revise your work, and 4.) how you edit. Enjoy the process.

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* This very thorough questionnaire was adapted from one used by ABE/GED instructors and administrators during their preparation for the 1986 Summer GED/Writing Skills Conference for the Central States, a very fine staff development effort which was conducted in Paducah, Kentucky and hosted by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Frank Smith

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# Myths of Writing

Whether writing should be considered to be as natural as speech for anyone to learn and to practice may be the subject of debate. My own view is that every child who can talk has the capacity to learn to write and also to seize upon its possibilities with enthusiasm. But in any case, I think there can be little debate that writing as children are expected to learn and to practice it in many classrooms is a highly unnatural activity, reflecting (or creating) some basic misconceptions about the nature of writing and about the manner in which proficient writers usually write.

Not all teachers harbor all or even many of these misconceptions. Nevertheless I believe they are sufficiently egregious both in school and out to warrant their exposure and examination. Many of the misconceptions constitute handicaps in their own writing as well as in their efforts to teach children how to write.

I shall present and briefly discuss a collection of twenty-one misconceptions—Smith's myths—which I acquired in the course of a recent exploration of writing (Smith 1981*b*). For display purposes I shall organize my collection into sets of myths about the nature of writing, about how writing is learned, and about how it is practiced, concluding with a grand myth about who is able to teach writing.

## Myths about the Nature of Writing

1. *Writing is for the transmission of information*. Reality: Two major functions of writing—to create experiences and to explore ideas—are obscured if not ignored by the contemporary "information processing" approach to literacy (Rosenblatt 1980). Children may not have much new knowledge to convey to other people, but they will use all forms of language, including writing if they become aware of its poten-

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tial, to create worlds of experience and of ideas which they can explore personally, enjoy, and perhaps subsequently share with others. A danger of the information transmission myth is that it focusses attention on how texts are presented from the point of view of a reader (usually one very touchy about minor points of spelling and punctuation) rather than on what the act of writing can accomplish for the developing thought of the writer. The writer is overlooked.

2. *Writing is for communication.* Reality: Writing can of course be used for communication, but this is scarcely its only or even major value, certainly not for children. The writer is always the first reader and may often be the only one (for diaries, journals, notes, and more extended texts written for the writer's own exploratory or other purposes). Of course, children often like to *show* what they write—until they become self-conscious about their expression, neatness, punctuation or spelling errors—but the purpose of this social act is to share their delight or to demonstrate how clever they are, rather than to communicate information. A similar personal motivation is not absent among adults who have their own written creations prominently displayed on staffroom notice boards or in professional journals.

3. *Writing involves transferring thoughts from the mind to paper.* Reality: Writing can create ideas and experiences on paper which could never have existence in the mind (and possibly not in the "real world" either). Thoughts are created in the act of writing, which changes the writer just as it changes the paper on which the text is produced. Many authors have said that their books know more than they do; that they cannot recount in detail what their books contain before, while, or after they write them. Writing is not a matter of taking dictation from yourself; it is more like a conversation with a highly responsive and reflective other person. Some reasons why writing is so potent in permitting writers to form and develop ideas they might otherwise not have are considered in the following discussion of myths #4 and #5.

4. *Writing is permanent, speech ephemeral.* Reality: Speech, once uttered, can rarely be revised, no matter how much we might struggle to unsay something we wish we had not said. But writing can be reflected upon, altered, and even erased at will. This is the first great and unique potential of writing—that it gives the writer power to manipulate time. Events that occurred in the past or that may occur in the future can be evaluated, organized, and changed. What will be read quickly can be written slowly. What may be read several times need be written only once. What will be read first can be written last. What is written first need not remain first; the order of anything that is written can be changed. Such control over time is completely beyond the scope of spoken language or of thought that remains "in the head."

5. *Writing is a linear, left-to-right process.* Reality: Writing can be done in several places and directions concurrently, and is as easily manipulated in space as it is in time. Texts can be constructed from writing done on separate pieces of paper, in notebooks, on index cards, or on chalk boards at the same time that a main draft is being produced. Words and lines can be moved around on a page just as pages themselves can be reshuffled into different sequences. Writing is a plastic art.

6. *Writing is speech plus handwriting, spelling and punctuation.* Reality: Every

kind of text has its own conventions of form and expression quite different from any kind of speech. The relevant models for writing are how other people write, not how they speak. Spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, indentation, word dividing, neatness, and so forth are necessary aspects of the *transcription* required to make written language manifest, though what is sufficient for a writer to produce and explore written experiences and ideas is by no means as detailed or demanding as the intricacy of transcription required by a reader. The transcription aspects of writing need not in fact be done by the writer; they can be looked after by a secretary. For all writers, undue concern with transcription can interfere with *composition*, the creative and exploratory aspect of writing which is of course its major value to the writer.

7. *A writer is a special kind of person*. Reality: There is no evidence that writers are any more intelligent, sensitive, talented, dedicated, disciplined, or persevering than people who do not write. Writers come from no exclusive kind of background. Some come from large families, some from small; some from rich, others from poor; some have literate parents, others the reverse; some received family encouragement, others did not. There is only one difference between writers and people who do not write—*writers write*. This unique difference may be because writers have some rare and as yet undiscovered gene for writing, though I doubt it. An alternative is that all children are born capable of learning to write at least as well as they learn to talk, but that something goes wrong. What goes wrong could be related to some of the myths that follow.

## Myths about How Writing Is Learned

8. *Learning to write precedes writing*. Reality: Both reading and writing can only be learned in the course of reading and writing. Writing may need years of practice to make it fluent and facile (for most of us this "learning to write" continues all our lives), but the fluency and facility come with writing, not with repetitive and separate exercises and drills. The only difference between children learning to write and more proficient adults is that children need more help—they can write less by themselves. They need their own writing to be done for them just as they need other people's writing to be read to them. Unless children try to write and receive help in writing, they will have no motivation for attending to "writing" exercises and instruction, they will find such instruction incomprehensible, and they will not read in ways that will help them learn to write. A disastrous consequence of the "learn now, write later" myth is that the "secretarial" transcription aspects of writing are emphasized before the learner has a chance to experience or even understand the composition aspect of being an author. Even as a means of becoming a secretary, this appraoch is still not an efficient way to learn.

9. *Writing is learned from instruction*. Reality: Not even such transcription skills as spelling, punctuation or capitalization can be learned from lectures, from reading about them, or from drills. Spelling is too complex to be learned from rules or by memorizing word lists (Smith 1981*a*; in more detail in Smith 1981*b*). And the "rules" of punctuation and capitalization tend like all grammatical explanations to be circular—"Begin every sentence with a capital letter," "What is a sentence?" "Something that begins with a capital letter." Formal instruction in grammar is

necessarily restricted to conventional niceties like subject-verb agreement, which do not constitute a comprehensive or even comprehensible system for enabling anyone to get thoughts on paper. The easiest way to learn to write is to see something you would like to say (or would like to be able to say) being written.

10. *Writing is learned by writing*. Reality: No one writes enough, especially at school, to have enough mistakes corrected to learn to write by trial and error. Not even the transcription aspects of writing could be learned in this way, let alone all the subtleties of style and expression. The only source of knowledge sufficiently rich and reliable for learning about written language is the writing already done by others. In other words, one learns to write by reading. The act of writing is critical as a *basis* for learning to write from reading; the desire to write ourselves provides an incentive and direction for learning about writing from reading. But the writing that anyone does must be vastly complemented by reading if it is to achieve anything like the creative and communicative power that written language offers.

11. *Most classrooms are reasonable places in which to expect children to learn to write*. Reality: Most professional writers could not write with the physical and psychological constraints under which many children are expected to learn to write in school. Children who attempted to behave the way most adults find it necessary to behave while writing would probably not be permitted to stay in the classroom. Much of this discrepancy can be attributed to the following myths (unless the myths themselves have been created to justify the conditions existing in many classrooms).

## Myths about the Act of Writing

12. *You must have something to say in order to write*. Reality: You often need to write in order to have anything to say. Thought comes with writing, and writing may never come if it is postponed until we are satisfied that we have something to say. Like every other reference to "writing" in this article, this assertion of "write first, see what you had to say later" applies to all manifestations of written language, to letters and memoranda as well as to short stories and novels, to poems, plays, and film scripts as well as to diaries, journals, term papers, research reports, and notes for ourselves and for others.

13. *Writing should be easy*. Reality: Writing is often hard work; it requires concentration, physical effort, and a tolerance for frustration and disappointment. The fact that writing is a demanding activity should not discourage anyone from writing, especially children. Many satisfying activities require physical effort and are not necessarily easy, especially in the learning. Children are not strangers to the idea that worthwhile ends may require effort and concentration, which they frequently display in their "play." Only work which seems to have no point or productive outcome is aversive.

14. *Writing should be right the first time*. Reality: Something all experienced writers know that seems to have been concealed from many teachers is that writing generally requires many drafts and revisions to get ideas into a form that satisfies the writer, and that a separate editorial polishing is required to make the text appropriate for a different reader. Part of the power of writing is that it does not have

to be right the first time, that drafts can usually be modified or even thrown away. In a few situations, usually contrived ones like examinations, writing may have to be right the first time. But ability to write in this way requires special practice and is the result of considerable experience. Only through freedom to write provisionally most of the time can the facility be developed of producing first drafts in a form reasonably presentable to a reader.

15. *Writing can be done to order*. Reality: Once again, every experienced writer knows that writing is often most reluctant to come when it is most urgently required, yet quite likely to begin to flow on inconvenient or impossible occasions. Writing to order is not an ability that develops independently of writing in a more spontaneous and unpredictable manner, nor should it be expected to take priority over such writing.

16. *A fixed period of "prewriting" can or should be distinguishable before any writing act*. Reality: The fact that it is difficult to write to order or to be right the first time does not entail that a fixed period of "prewriting time" exists that should be allocated before writing can be expected to occur. On the one hand, much of what is written involves a whole lifetime of preparation—of experiencing, reading, reflecting, and arguing. It is only from a transcription point of view that an author can say that work began on a particular text at a particular time, even if that was the time when a decision to write was made or formal research begun. And many relevant ideas for what we might propose to write come to us when we are not thinking specifically about what we propose to write, perhaps when we "daydream" or when we are supposed to be thinking about something else. On the other hand, writing itself can be prewriting. As we draft one part of a text, we reflect upon what we might write next or upon what we have written already. The act of writing does not break itself down into neatly identifiable and manageable "steps," rather it is a part of all our existence.

17. *Writing is a sedentary activity*. Reality: Little of the reflective or preparatory aspects of writing can or need be performed at a desk, and even the transcription of writing is sometimes more comfortably performed standing up or against a wall. The traditional notion of the writer quietly working at the desk is romantic and unrealistic.

18. *Writing is a silent activity*. Reality: Writing frequently involves making noise, not only to exchange ideas (or feelings) with other people, but to give vent to expressions of exhilaration or frustration. As with myths #15 and #17, the image of a writer attentive to his muse in garrot or cell (the stereotype is usually sexual as well as behavioral) is sentimentalized and unrealistic.

19. *Writing is a solitary activity*. Reality: Writing in general often requires other people to stimulate discussion, to provide spellings, to listen to choice phrases, and even just for companionship in an activity which can be so personal and unpredictable that it creates considerable stress. And especially when writing is being learned there is often a great need for and advantage in people working together on a letter, poem, or story. The ability to write alone comes with experience, and is not always easy or necessary.

20. *Writing is a tidy activity*. Reality: Truly creative (or difficult) writing spreads itself all over the writing surface and all over the floor. Writing is messy; it

can involve scissors, paste, transparent tape, paper clips, staplers, pens and papers of many colors and more than one working surface (not all necessarily horizontal).

21. *Writing should be the same for everyone.* Reality: All writers have idiosyncracies. Some write best in the morning, some in the evening; some with pen or pencil, some with typewriter or tape recorder; some only in silence, others only in company; some systematically, others irregularly. Most writers have very strong preferences about writing with a particular kind of instrument on a particular kind of paper in particular locations at particular times with particular kinds of physical and psychological support, holding to these supports with a tenacity verging on superstition. But then superstition is a characteristic of all high-risk occupations. Steeplejacks and astronauts have their rabbits' feet. Writers put themselves on the line and undertake enterprises without knowing what the outcome will be. Inconvenient though it might often be, writing behavior may have to be idiosyncratic if it is to be engaged in at all.

## The Grand Myth about Who Can Teach Writing

22. *People who do not themselves enjoy and practice writing can teach children how to write.* Reality: Anyone who hopes to teach children how to write must 1) demonstrate what writing does, and 2) demonstrate how to do it. A "teacher" who dislikes or fears writing will demonstrate that writing is to be disliked or feared, just as a teacher who is only seen writing comments on children's work, reports for parents, or notes and exercises for classroom activities will demonstrate that writing is simply for administrative and classroom purposes. Children will learn what they are taught (Smith 1981*a*), and a teacher who perceives writing as a tedious chore with trivial applications will teach just those things.

For most of the myths I have collected I have not attempted to present a means for their eradication. My general feeling (or hope) is that recognition of the myth should be sufficient for most teachers to avoid falling victim to it. But for the myth of who can teach writing I want to offer a practical suggestion.

The assertion is that children will learn to write and to enjoy writing only in the presence of teachers (or other adults) who themselves write and enjoy writing. If some teachers do not have these necessary characteristics, then more might be done to bring people who do have them into the classroom, not just the professionals like local authors and journalists but anyone who enjoys writing letters, poetry, or short stories (just as athletic coaches and assistants do not need to be professional athletes themselves, though they are expected to understand and enjoy the sport).

But an additional and even more desirable solution would be for all teachers to learn to become at least moderately keen and competent writers. And for this they should not themselves turn to the exercises and "how to do it" books any more than they should try to educate their own pupils in this way. Teachers should learn the way children should learn, in the mutual effort of writing with a purpose—the primary initial purpose being one's own joy and satisfaction with what is written—and in the delight of reading widely from a writer's perspective. The easiest way for teachers to learn these things in order to teach children in this way is to learn them *with* children, to share the writing activities with the children themselves. In this way, teachers and children alike should be best able to avoid the tyranny of all the myths of writing, and in the process discover that writing is a natural, attainable, enjoyable, and highly productive way of spending one's time.

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WRITE-Now Comment: We believe this article is very appropriate for ABE/GED instructors. You might suggest that readers think about how the references to children apply to adults. For example, upon re-wording the last myth - THE GRAND MYTH - think about how well people or adult students or others will work.

By Karl K. Taylor

**Thanks, AAACE, we needed that!**

**We thank the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education(AAACE) for permitting us to reprint this article.**

# Teaching writing in the GED program

**From: Lifelong Learning, January, 1987.**

If you've never carried home a stack of themes to grade from your General Educational Development (GED) class, you may after 1988. At that time, GED candidates will be required to write a composition or essay. To prepare them, we will have to teach how to generate ideas, how to organize papers, how to [illegible]e the thesis, how to paragraph, and [illegible] to write introductions and conclusions. For most of us, this new requirement comes as a shock because we aren't adequately trained to teach writing—maybe grammar or spelling or punctuation—but not writing. This new task will make demands on many people—the students, the teachers, and those administering the test.

Some critics argue that the current writing test—which focuses on usage and editing skills in a multiple-choice format—is not measuring *directly* the students' ability to write. In other words, students' ability to identify or correct errors in someone else's prose is no guarantee they can avoid errors in their own writing. As a result, the new GED test will consist of both a written essay and the multiple-choice examination of editing skills. According to Douglas R. Whitney, Director of The General Educational Development Testing Service, the candidates will be given 30 minutes to write an argumentative composition. The essays will be scored by English teachers hired and trained either by the regional superintendent or others to evaluate the compositions holistically.

Holistic scoring is a method for evaluating a piece of writing by looking at it as a whole. Two readers review a paper quickly and evaluate it from an overall impression, looking at the total effect of the essay, not at the individual parts. A misplaced modifier, a comma fault, or a sentence fragment should carry no great weight in the score of a paper. The candidate is entitled to make some mistakes; he or she is writing hurriedly in a tense situation, with no dictionary or leisure time. If the paper is poorly written, that will be the readers' first impressions, and they will not need to analyze the errors one by one to evaluate the essay. Once the reviewers have read the compositions, they award a score from 1 (low) to 6 (high). If both agree within one point, the score stands. However, if they cannot agree, a third reviewer is called upon to evaluate the essay. Through a great deal of research, holistic scoring has been shown to be a valid and reliable means of evaluating writing (Cooper and Odell, 1978; White, 1985).

As GED educators, what will this new change mean to us? Having taught remedial composition for almost 20 years, I believe the range of writing abilities will be so great that we will not be able to deal adequately with them in the same classroom. At Illinois Central College, we have recognized this problem in college students, and as a result we offer three remedial writing courses which vary in difficulty. Depending on their skills, students are placed in one or more remedial classes until they are ready for a college transfer course. On the basis of my previous experience, I believe we will need at least two writing courses for GED candidates. I predict that from 65-75% of our students will need at least two courses to pass the exam. These will be the students who were placed in the general English tracks in high school, who filled blanks, circled adverbs, underlined adjectives, and diagrammed sentences. But they have never been asked to write whole compositions. I believe our Pre-GED or Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes will be filled with people who will need a great deal of time and attention. They will not be able to pass the GED exam after writing two or three papers and completing a few workbook pages. In fact, I believe this group will be our greatest challenge. If we do not reach them, the number of people passing the exam will decline significantly, and the new writing requirement may be judged unrealistically difficult for the GED exam. I predict that only 20-25% of the students will respond to a minimum amount of instruction and practice. For all practical purposes, they just need practice, and five or six papers will perhaps be adequate preparation for the test. *In short, my predictions are that this new writing requirement will be very difficult for 65-75% of our students, that large numbers will be placed in ABE or Pre-GED in order to have sufficient time to master the material, that virtually no one will pass the GED without formal instruction in writing, and that generally this new requirement will increase the number of dropouts from our programs.*

Frankly, this will be a difficult time for GED teachers because most of us have never received any formal training in the teaching of writing. As many of you know, freshman composition is often the only place where many English teachers have to write extensively or where they see how composition might be taught. What I know about teaching writing came from classroom experi-

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*l K. Taylor is Chairman of Adult Basic Education at Illinois Central College.*

*Lifelong learning: An omnibus of practice and research, Vol. 10, No. 4, 1987.*

ence, personal reading and research, and an individualized doctoral program. My point is that we will have to do a great deal of work on our own in order to prepare for the task ahead of us. While a few textbooks have been written for the kinds of students we will be facing, we also may need to develop our own materials.

What, then, are some of the problems involved in developing a writing curriculum for a GED program?

1. Some students will be fairly good writers when they walk into our classrooms and will need just a little time to reach the necessary competence. The majority, however, will need much more time. Without proper placement, our classes will contain a wide range of abilities, making teaching and learning difficult.

2. Many students will suffer from various physical and perceptual problems which will need attention if we are to have success with them. In a sample of over 100 remedial students at the college level, I found that approximately 25% had correctable vision problems and 5% had severe hearing loss. These are two or three times the national average (Taylor, 1980).

3. Most students will not know what an essay is, so time will have to be spent defining, discussing, and illustrating it.

4. Students will need to understand that writing is not merely talking on paper; it is much different from oral language. Many successful students begin to see this transition from the oral to the written language during junior high, but most GED students will not have reached that point.

5. Time will be a major problem. In our GED classes at Illinois Central College, we spend approximately 20 hours a semester on the English portion and never write a paper. In a remedial writing course, students would spend over 48 hours and write at least eight compositions. Therefore, we will need to spend a great deal of time on English, perhaps more than twice as much as we do now.

6. This problem of time leads to the problems of selecting materials and assignments. Every assignment, every paper must count and fulfill a particular requirement in the program we set up. We are preparing students to pass the GED exam; we are not preparing them to be writing teachers. Therefore, we must select what is most important for the students to know.

7. Another major issue will be deciding what type of approach we will want to take in our instruction. For instance, we will hear people say that we must teach grammar to these students before we can expect them to write correctly. Still other teachers will say that students need to write good sentences before they can write whole themes. Others will want them to write journals, while some will probably have the students write term papers. No curriculum has yet been devised to teach writing in the GED class, but much research has already been done which will help us teach people how to write reasonably well.

Now that we are aware of some of the problems with this new requirement, how do we go about solving them and setting up a writing component in our GED program?

1. Our first task will be to devise a writing sample which we can use to place students in either the GED or the Pre-GED. Generally, three types of writing samples are used: the open-ended in which the student is asked to write about anything, the controlled in which the student must write on an assigned topic, or the controlled topic with a kind of context provided. In the latter case, the student might be asked to respond to the following question: "For the last two terms, a conservative Republican has been elected to the White House. More and more people want to cut government social programs, like food stamps or public aid. Large numbers of people are finding leaders like Jerry Falwell attractive. In light of these changes, is liberalism dead?" I personally prefer giving the students an expository article to read and asking them to summarize it. This provides the students with a subject to write about and avoids the problems associated with the other types of tasks.

2. After we have devised a writing sample, we need to decide what skills students need to possess when we place them in either Pre-GED or GED—what skills should they have when they enter and leave a class? With this information, we can place them appropriately.

3. Next, we need to secure equipment for testing vision and hearing or to seek the help of our county health departments.

4. We now have to devise a writing curriculum, to determine the kinds, the number, and the length of our assi ments. I estimate that students will n to write eight to ten papers in Pre-GED and about eight in GED. At first, the papers will be rather short (about 250 words), but the last few papers should be 500 to 750 words. I suggest these progressively longer assignments so that the students don't feel overwhelmed at the start.

5. What types of assignments would be appropriate?

Ideally, our assignments need to move from the concrete to the abstract, from what the students will find relatively easy to what will be a challenge to them. As James Britton and others (1975) have shown, writing is a developmental skill; certain tasks are much easier to perform than others at various levels of development. Britton found that students responded extremely well to assignments which began with the narrative, moved to the expository, and ended with the argumentative. Too often, he found, many teachers ask students to write very difficult, abstract essays without sufficient prior experience and expect them to be abl master all the skills of writing at the same time—correct grammar, correct spelling, proper organization, readable style, and so on. He recommended breaking the task down, asking the students to gradually produce more and more complex work, and increasing gradually grading standards and expectations. The goal is to help the students develop a healthy attitude toward writing and make the task as easy as possible.

Once the students find writing reasonably comfortable, their assignments should become more directed and the grading more demanding. In order to build self-confidence, less stress should initially be placed on grades or on anything that will diminish the ego. However, once students feel confidence in themselves and their words flow a little easier on the page, we need to give them more demanding assignments which address a wider audience than themselves or their teacher. As Hillocks (1975) has pointed out, the major problems of student writing at this stage lack of specificity and organization. For example, I ask students to describe a small object of their own choosing like a peanut butter sandwich or a small figurine in no *fewer* than 250 words. When they are finished, even the weakest student knows how to be specific. They also need to know how to select some details and leave out others, so I ask them to describe something relatively large like their room or a building *in no more* than 500 words. From this experience, they learn to be concise (Taylor, 1973).

Once the students have learned expansion and contraction, the teacher can deal with some elementary organizational matters like thesis statements, topic sentences, introductions, and conclusions. By this time, the students should be relatively secure about their abilities, and the teachers should be marking more errors without making the experience too frustrating for the students. Once students can grasp some of the simple organizational concerns, they should be exposed to a few of the rhetorical patterns which writers use to structure what they have to say. Because time is at such a premium, it would probably be best to concentrate on three types – process, comparison, and cause/effect – in that order. Finally, the last two papers could focus on induction and deduction, the chief modes used in argumentation. *In short, I believe that the eight to ten Pre-GED assignments should be narrative and descriptive in nature, and that the eight GED tasks should contain two or three descriptive assignments, one process, one comparison, one cause/effect, one inductive, and one deductive.* These assignments should be given in a sequence which moves from the simple to the complex.

If we are to give these assignments, what method do we use to teach them? I recommend the writing process approach developed by Emig (1971) at Rutgers, Flower and Hayes (1977) at Carnegie-Mellon, and Graves (1983) at the University of New Hampshire. Essentially, these researchers found that the traditional method for teaching writing was more harmful than helpful to students and that it bore little resemblance to how writing is done in the real world.

Using the traditional method, the English teacher discusses writing techniques, explaining how to write good introductions or conclusions, illustrating the various rhetorical types and clarifying any major grammatical problems. In this situation the teacher is doing all the work, and the students are absorbing information passively. The teacher hopes the students will be able to transfer the general suggestions about writing to their papers. Then, the teacher gives an assignment which the students complete in class under pressure or at home. The teacher's function is to convey information generally, answer a few specific questions, and grade the papers when they are submitted.

This approach denies what is known about how people write in non-academic settings and creates many undesirable and unpleasant problems for the teacher and students.

1. Many people find it difficult to apply what the teacher is saying generally about writing to their own papers.

2. Many students are simply not interested enough to sit passively and to listen to lectures about writing. They tune out.

3. Often the teacher does not see what the students have written until they have turned in their papers for grading.

4. Marking papers after submission rarely improves student writing because students do not review the teacher's comments carefully or do not find them valuable after the fact.

5. Finally, most writing in the real world is not done under the pressure of a 45- or 60-minute deadline or by an individual working independently. Asking students to write under pressure forces them to delete important steps in planning and revising.

Thus, the traditional approach of teaching writing has not been successful for many students because the teacher has not been directly involved in the process until a final draft is submitted. Because many students failed using this approach, they became discouraged and disillusioned. Their teachers felt the students never reached their expectations.

Using the writing process approach, the English teacher occasionally may talk generally about a few writing techniques which may be applicable to many students. However, the bulk of class time is spent with the students working individually or in small groups on their themes. The task is broken into four steps: pre-writing, writing, revising, and editing. During the first stage, students are shown how to brainstorm and select a topic. Recently, I saw a fifth-grade teacher use this technique with her enthusiastic class which had just returned from watching a circus set up in a local park. Together they listed on the board everything imaginable they had seen the previous day – the animals, the employees, the vehicles, and so on. Then, they proceeded to select what seemed most interesting and appropriate to write about. After they wrote their first drafts at home, fellow students read their papers in class and suggested changes. Meanwhile, the teacher was working with individuals on their specific writing problems. She was participating in the learning process, offering help when it was relevant and needed. With suggestions from classmates, the students revised their first drafts; and new groups reviewed and criticized them. Finally, a third draft was edited by the small groups before it was submitted to the teacher for grading.

This new method has become popular, and both students and teachers like it.

1. The teacher supplies assistance when it is needed, when the student is in the process of writing a paper, and when changes can still be made.

2. The students are actively, not passively, involved in learning.

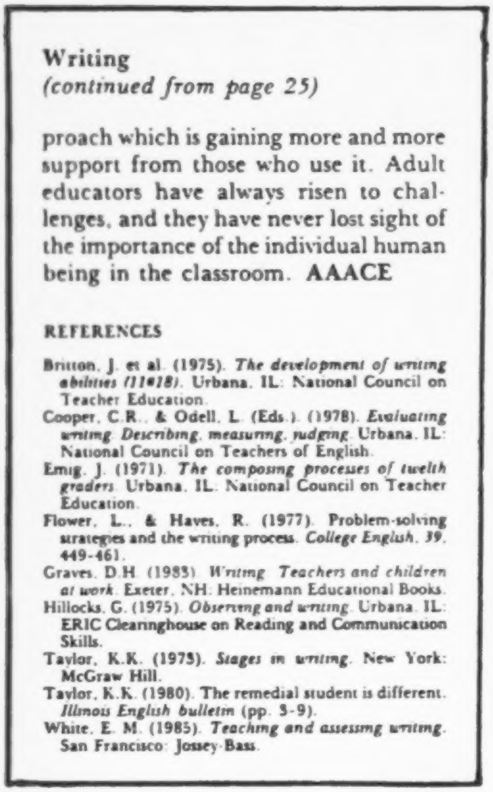
3. Students write better papers because they have written more drafts and because their themes become collaborative efforts.

4. Teachers do not have to spend nearly as much time grading because students have already found and corrected many problems.

5. Classrooms tend to become practical, relevant, and interesting for teachers and students alike.

In summary, I am both pleased and concerned about the new writing component on the GED test. This requirement will help place more emphasis on writing in the schools, but it has the potential for creating a great many problems. Learning to write is a very difficult task which takes a long time to master. Few of us are trained to teach writing, and we must be careful to evaluate the easy solutions that will be suggested for our problems. Instead, I recommend the writing process ap-

*(See Writing on page 28)*



### Writing

*(continued from page 25)*

proach which is gaining more and more support from those who use it. Adult educators have always risen to challenges, and they have never lost sight of the importance of the individual human being in the classroom. **AAACE**

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The WRITE-Now team was delighted to come upon Karl Taylor's important and carefully written article, "Teaching Writing In The GED Program." We received the January 1987 issue of Lifelong Learning just in time to read it and recommend it to several adult educators who attended a WRITE-Now presentation we co-hosted at the 1987 PAACE Mid-Winter Conference. We suggest that Taylor's article be used as a pre-workshop reading assignment for ABE/GED practitioners and program administrators. If they have not given much thought to WRITE-Now preparations, they will probably do so after reading and discussing the article.

# EXCERPTS FROM: AN I - SEARCH PERSPECTIVE ON LANGUAGE/COMPOSITION RESEARCH

by William Strong

The WRITE-Now Team is pleased to offer most of an excellent article by William Strong, a highly respected author and teacher of writing. The article originally appeared in the September 1986 issue of the English Journal. We include it in our manual because we hope that ABE/GED practitioners will want to spend some time with the books, articles, and research studies that have made significant contributions to the WRITE cause.

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## The Early Seventies

On Tuesday evenings, I drove my black, rusted-out 1950 Dodge van to NCTE headquarters, where I met with other graduate students to participate in discussions led by Alan Purves, Jim Hoetker, and Bryant Fillion. The most interesting of these seminars concerned a slim monograph that had just been published by NCTE. Its author was Janet Emig, and its title was The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders (1971). Here was research that initiated a major shift in emphasis . . . that Richard Larson later called the most important of the decade.

What Emig did, with elegant directness, was define global stages of composing through a case-study approach. By taking us inside the moves made by young writers--reformulating, stopping, reflecting, changing--she invited us to consider writing from both behavioral and cognitive perspectives. Her methodology was rigorous in a new way. Instead of defining experimental and control treatments and setting out to prove hypotheses through measurement and statistical analysis, Emig elected to describe what was actually happening. As Cooper and Odell (1978) have noted, most of the research summarized by Braddock et al (1963) was pedagogical in nature--the assumption being that composing processes were already understood and hardly deserving of study. Emig's work legitimized an emphasis on basic research. It shifted the focus from unfounded assumptions of what writers ought to do toward clearer descriptions of real behavior.

The researchers who followed Emig's lead have been a star-studded cast--among them, Stallard (1974). Pianko (1979), Calkins (1980), Sommers (1980), Perl (1983), and Faigley and Witte (1983). All have focused on aspects of composing--planning, goal-setting, decision-making, or revising--to provide fuller understanding of how writers work. With regard to prewriting, protocols show that many student and professional writers work from highly personalized, sketchy plans. With regard to revising, protocols reveal striking differences in the behavior of good and poor writers. The net effect has been to call into question a linear, step-by-step model of composing. Research repeatedly demonstrates that composing, for many people, is highly recursive. Revision often occurs early on, and new material sometimes develops in what traditionally was seen as the editing stage.

## The Mid-Seventies

At work, I tried to help experienced teachers come to grips with the problem of evaluating student writing. Accountability was the issue and the question was how to measure linguistic performance on something other than standardized tests. As we puzzled about how to make valid and reliable judgements on a schoolwide basis, the book that we relied on, not surprisingly, was Paul Diederich's Measuring Growth in English (1974). It enlarged our vision of "grading papers."

Diederich's book turned out to be a practical guide for doing grassroots assessment. Its strategy was to demystify general impression and analytic scoring. It was power to the people in the best sense of that phrase--a lucid discussion of how teachers might take control and begin to assess program effectiveness (and student growth) on a systematic basis. If ever a book anticipated a here-and-now need in the Age of Accountability--the flip side of the Age of Aquarius, as Robert Hogan noted in the Preface--this was it. Not only did it provide a starting point and a frame of reference for futher learning about assessment, but it also encouraged us to "take responsibility for language evaluation rather than abdicating it to experts. Simply put, it helped us determine what we knew (and didn't know) about the very foundations of our day-to-day work.

Obviously, grading papers has been a topic of feverish activity since the publication of Diederich's book. Not only do many schools, districts, and states conduct regular assessments, but the NAEP results in Reading, Thinking, and Writing (1981) received wide publicity. The development of primary-trait scoring by Richard Lloyd-Jones greatly strengthened the evaluation efforts of NAEP and raised new issues for research--among them, the relation of certain text features to overall judgments of writing quality. Publications related to assessment--for example Cooper and Odell (1977); Davis, Scriven, and Thomas (1981); and the National Writing Project Evaluation Portfolio (1983), and Cooper et al (1984)--suggest that research on writing quality has in itself become a major research emphasis, not merely a tool. With educational reform now more than a slogan, the assessment emphasis will no doubt be strengthened.

## The Late Seventies

And so it was that I found myself in an empty, shadow-filled classroom at the Bay Area Writing Project in 1978, listening to advice from Miles Myers on how I might integrate ideas about cohesion into a textbook I was working on. I realized once again my enormous ignorance of language/composition research. For weeks I had been trying to puzzle out the linkage between sentences on an intuitive basis and had gotten only headaches for my efforts. Later, in a one-room London apartment with pale blue walls, I read Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan's Cohesion in English (1976) with all the intensity that only true desperation can inspire.

What Halliday and Hasan had done was to create a grammar of intersentence ties. They showed how text was bound together by five types of cohesive links--reference, substitution, ellipsis, lexical cohesion, conjunction--and how each depended on presupposition, the pointing across sentence boundaries. As I worked through their analysis and studied their Taxonomy of Cohesion, I realized that here was a revolutionary perspective--a way of understanding continuity in prose and making intuitions about connectedness explicit.

### The Early Eighties

I was also a little discouraged about research. Many studies seemed unconnected to the lives of teachers I worked with in the Utah Writing Project. Like them, I hungered for contex and connectedness, not bits and pieces. I was looking for perspective, preferably a human perspective. It was with relief, then, that I rediscovered the work of two people who had escaped my attention earlier. The first was Mina Shaughnessy, author of *Errors and Expectations* (1977); the second, Donald Graves, a man whose articles in *Language Arts* revealed enormous zest, intelligence, and down-to-earth clarity. Read in tandem, the two had a tonic effect on my malaise.

I resonated to the writing of both Shaughnessy and Graves because of their radical approach. They paid attention to patterns of language behavior without losing sight of the human (or instructional) situation. Their approach was to discuss patterns in context. Moreover, their research has profoundly ethical underpinnings: They cared about their research subjects. Both were skilled, sensitive teachers who were using descriptive approaches to inform the work of other teachers. Finally, I was impressed by their ability to relate observations to classroom practice. Both seemed to say that by paying attention to student learning we could eventually learn how to teach. They approached teach (and research) with humility, not with the arrogance so characteristic of lesser minds. Their work represented a political alternative to simple-minded empiricism.

Following the lead of Shaughnessy and Graves, important ethnographic work has been done by Sowers (1979), Bissex (1980), Dyson (1981), Newkirk (1982), and Atwell (1984). And Grave's fine book, Writing: Teachers and Children at Work (1983), can be read and reread with profit. The national movement related to "writing to learn" and reading/writing "connections" seems destined to promote more ethnographic research. So too does the teacher-as-researcher emphasis sparked by the National Writing Project and to some extent popularized by Language Arts and the NCTE Research Foundation. Research has become less a specialized domain and more a way of thinking systematically about one's work. Mina Shaughnessy, rest her soul, would be pleased.

## The Mid-Eighties

And thus we come to the mid-eighties--a time of consolidation and looking back perspective. My desk seems endlessly cluttered with NCTE flyers, announcements, memos, solicitations, and new publications. I feel guilty about not reading the new material in language/composition research as thoroughly as I should; but, like you, I sometimes pack a journal into my briefcase, hoping to digest an article between real-world exigencies. My interest is not so much in "what's new" as in what makes sense--which is why Marvin Klein's The Development of Writing in Children: Pre-K through Grade 8 (1985) has recently been worth reading.

Klein synthesizes language research from a cross-cultural viewpoint, explains principles derived from psycholinguistics, and makes suggestions for classroom practice. By drawing upon both basic and descriptive studies--meshing a theorydriven approach with exploratory, "bottom-up" research--he helps to uncover processes and patterns of language development, inviting readers to examine what they have students do in writing. Klein might be compared to Nancie Atwell, a teacher-researcher gifted enough to be recognized by Esquire magazine in its December 1984 issue on people who are shaping America for the better. Like Atwell, Klein compromises neither his interest in research nor his interest in practice by connecting the two.

This final trend is toward research integration. It has been signaled, in part, by theoretical statements such as Myers' A Model of The Composing Process (1980) and by recent journal articles and research summaries--for example, Mellon's "Language Competence" (1981), Flower and Hayes' "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing" (1981), and Tierney and Pearson's "Toward a Composing Model of Reading" (1983). It was signaled too by a massive turnabout for George Hillocks' meta-analysis titled "What Works in Composition" (1984) at a recent NCTE convention. Whatever one thinks of the intellectual tradeoffs resulting from meta-analysis, a buzzword for the eighties, the profession desperately needs to make sense of its research proliferation. Indeed, the present consolidation phase seems to resemble twenty years earlier--when Research in Written Composition (1963) had just been published by NCTE.

## A Time Capsule

For me, then, a twenty-year perspective on key studies in language/composition research--ones that permanently shaped my thinking, not to mention my career--must include these names: Kellog Hunt, Francis Christensen, Janet Emig, Paul Diederich, Michael Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, Mina Shaughenessy, Donald Graves, and Marvin Klein. These are all my all-star team, the heroes and heroines of my bookshelf hall of fame.

And who is on yours? As you scan the journals and monographs in your office or study, whose work has made a personal difference in your life? Does the scholarship of particular people carry with it the aura of an entire period or of special teaching situations? What studies or points-of-view do you keep close at hand? Why? Are the shifts in language/composition research partly personal, partly professional? What is the connection between the two--the significance of these shifts in your professional development? And, above all, how might your evolving story prove instructive to others in the language/composition community of teachers?

In summary, my implicit argument is that all of us enjoy narrative--and if that story happens to inform us about significant research in language and composition, so much the better. One might think of such inquiry as partly case study, partly survey research, and partly an ethnography of the cerebral cortex. The impetus for each study, like most scholarship in the humanities, would be to map spiritual territory--in this case, the field of language/composition scholarship as perceived by one of its consumers. Its methodology would be governed not so much by already established paradigms as by common sense and a willingness to speak the truth clearly. And its basic aim would be to address, from a personal perspective, the value-laden questions on the minds of many of us: What's worth reading? How can research make a day-to-day difference? Where have we been--and where are we going--as a profession?

Such questions seem, as the saying goes, "worthy of research."

The WRITE-Now Team hopes that ABE/GED practitioners will want to establish their own"bookshelf hall of fame."

Caution: Don't turn away from materials that seem to be addressing only the teaching of writing in elementary or pre-school settings. What Donald Graves has to say about his experiences with children can be of great value to adult educators, and the writing of Bissex and Sowers, for example, can be most helpful to teachers and tutors of adult beginning writers.

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# SOME PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR TEACHING ORGANIZATION IN WRITING

The ideas and techniques described below appeared in the September 1986 issue of English Journal. The WRITE-Now team studied, discussed, and selected these teacher-designed and teacher-tested strategies for their application to ABE/GED situations. We think they are WRITE on target!

*********************

To give ... students a place to start, I show them how to use a questioning approach before they begin writing. To make sure they have a topic and an audience in mind, I ask them to think about their readers: Who are they? What are they like? What is their interest in the subject?

Once students have a firm idea of what their readers' interests are, they generate questions readers might have. And as they list these questions, we discuss which ones should be emphasized by development of placement for particular readers. They make effective writing choices through providing answers to their readers' potential questions.

Mark Lynch
Glen Burnie, Maryland

One trick to organizing is knowing when to organize. Many inexperienced writers try to force their meaning to fit into a given form (such as the five-paragraph theme) before they have fully explored their ideas. When this occurs, student writing is likely to be dull, underdeveloped, ineffective. We must encourage inexperienced writers to write free of constraints; they must initially ignore word limits, audiences, and sentence structure. Instead, they should ask generative questions: "What do I mean here?" "Should I provide an example here?" "Is that all there is?" Before getting the information right for a reader, it must be right for the writer.

Only when students run out of ideas should they regroup. And if possible, the writer should allow some time to cool off. This transitional period helps writers gain the perspective needed to ask "What have I said here?" as opposed to "What did I mean to say?"

We must teach student writers to analyze prose by examining the order and development of content. In short, writers should block-off their ideas. Sections where the writer is clarifying an idea should be blocked off from transitional sections. Distinctions in meaning can be ascertained by asking the following questions: How does idea A relate to idea B? Is idea C more general or more specific than B? Once answers are obtained, sections should be labelled according to their aims.

Joseph M. Moxley
University of South Florida
Tampa

Find an essay to use as a model that has clear organizational elements like topic sentences and transitions. Cut it into paragraphs and then cut each paragraph into strips of single sentences. Put each paragraph of strips into an envelope and have groups try to put them into a sensible order using cues from the transitions and the logic of the content. Then have them put the essay together. When they are satisfied, show them the original and discuss the good and bad points of their own versions and the author's.

As follow-up, have them re-copy one of their own essay paragraphs, cut it up and place it in an envelope, bring it to class, and switch with someone for putting together. Then discuss the problems or assets of the original organization and the new one. With a computer, this process is easier since the original can remain untouched on disk while the printer produces an on-screen version of single sentences which can be cut up. Because the strategy is so concrete, it works well as a classroom activity, and students see quite literally that some pieces don't fit and some pieces fit better in places other than their author originally intended.

Barbara Osburg
Parkway North High School
St. Louis County, Missouri
Kathy Dunn Jackson
Alabama State University

Teach students to view their hands as natural outlines. After they have examined model essays, taken notes, and discussed the basic three parts of an essay--introduction, body, and closing--have students trace the outline of their hands in their notebooks. Identify the thumb as the introductory paragraph. Like a hitchhiker's extended thumb, it must grab attention and show a clear sense of direction.

The three long fingers are the body or middle paragraphs which must be developed separately even though they are part of the whole hand. The spaces between the fingers are like the indentations of paragraphs. Label the little finger as the closing which can quite naturally touch back to the starting idea.

Adding a ring, a decorative but identifying symbol, can be compared to creating a title. It can either be plain or fancy, a real gem or a diamond in the rough.

Anne L. Gautreau
Edsel Ford High School
Dearborn, Michigan
Joy Burwell Averett
J. F. Webb Senior High School
Oxford, North Carolina

"Tell 'em what ya gonna tell'em."

"Tell 'em."

"Tell 'em what ya told 'em."

This formula worked for the preacher, and I find it works for the ... writer. Couple this with the use of the partition, and the student writer can organize any subject.

What is a partition? It's the wall separating our classroom from the corridor. It sets us apart. In writing, a partition sets apart the main points of the essay. It is a preview that states clearly the areas to be covered in the body of the composition. The refined formula is this: Thesis statement of composition topic, preview and area one, preview and area two, and preview and area three, then the ending which goes back to area one.

When student writers master the preview/partition, the organization is set. As sophistication grows, the partition becomes less obvious and more artful yet still gives structure to the writing. That old preacher had the right idea.

Genevieve Gillen
Coral Gables, Florida

When writing about their ideas or experiences, basic writers often leap immediately into details which are so sketchy or of such a personal nature that they are meaningless to readers. They seldom provide transition between paragraphs or connections between ideas from sentence to sentence. Every idea, every sentence, stands alone like a punchline without a joke.

To illustrate the effect of this to my class of basic writers, I delivered several punchlines without jokes and then asked them what the jokes were about. They made good guesses. For example, they knew what came before "One to hold the light bulb and one to turn the ladder," and "orange you glad I didn't say banana" because they were familiar with the form of these types of jokes. While they found the guessing game fun, they admitted that if all jokes were presented that way, they would simply quit listening to them. They saw that the form served a function. The question that precedes a punchline is an opener or set-up for the joke just as an introduction serves as a set-up for an essay.

Once students understood the importance of and learned to write introductions, they began to plan the content of the rest of their essays so they too would have an intended rather than a haphazard effect on the reader.

Patricia Jane Jones
Albany, California

We begin in a large group by brainstorming a topic. I repeatedly emphasize that everyone has knowledge to contribute, and ultimately students concur.

Topics are broad: "Things That Are Blue," "Round Objects," "Paper Products," "Uses for Signs," etc. Later students select topics requiring research.

The second step is to analyze the list on the blackboard for two or more things that have some common trait. Another list is generated as students synthesize related ideas.

For each like-grouping I elicit a label which I write above the examples. We now have category labels and at least two examples. We finally omit the nongroupable ideas.

Next, I introduce outline symbols. Roman numerals indicate the category labels and capital letters the examples. We marvel as order emerges from a chaotic muddle of words.

For the following period, I present on the overhead projector an essay

I have written based on the class' outline. As a group we finish the last paragraph or two.

Practice builds confidence, so students next choose their own topics and repeat the process first in small groups and finally as individuals.

Sharon M. Collins
Cleveland Heights-University Heights
Ohio

A successful strategy I use in teaching writing involves a year-long process. For the first semester students maintain a journal, making at least three entries a week. They could write on any topic they desired and no points were deducted for errors. Students were simply asked to to write; the more they wrote, the better the grade. Yes, I read and graded each. It was a simple quantitative grade: three entries, a C; four entries, a B; five entries, an A. To ease the load of 125-150 students, I staggered their due dates; this way I had to skim only 30 - 35 journals a night. I would often make comments or respond to questions they had written and soon became a confidante for many students. The bottom line was that students were comfortable with writing while developing a sense of voice and audience.

In the second semester I take a different approach giving students a writing assignment each week, four topics to choose from for each assignment, which was graded by focusing on a common writing error. Again the assignments were staggered to ease the load while allowing me to conduct brief conferences with students who had experienced problems.

By year's end my students were comfortable in getting words on the page so that they could then concentrate on the complexities of organization.

John N. Avis
Central High School
Memphis, Tennessee

Threatened by formal processes such as outlining, some students abandon organizational schemes altogether. Offer these students the blank page. Permit them to respond wherever on the page words or phrases seem appropriate. Suggest devices to connect ideas: arrows, dotted lines, circles, flowchart symbols; in short, whatever it takes to get onto the page words which the subject suggests. Tolerate messiness, even doodling. For the time being, the act of writing is the thing. Encourage students to play with words as an artist might dabble with colors or shapes. Patterns will eventually emerge. If necessary you can prompt with questions: "How do these thoughts connect?" or "Into what sets do these thoughts divide themselves?" In the answers to these questions is the foundation for a teacher's explanations of such concepts as spatial organization, chronology, order of importance and familiarity in exposition or argumentation, etc.

Gino M. Abessinio
D. H. Conley High School
Greenville, North Carolina

A practical beginning in teaching organization is some form of pre- or free-writing to get students to think and put their ideas on paper. Then students look for free associated words and phrases finally choosing one important idea which stands out from the rest. This idea is written on a paper, and related words and phrases and branches from the prewriting are clustered around it. Students choose key words from the cluster which can be made into topic sentences for paragraphs and a thesis for the essay.

Writing the rough draft is the next step. Then comes proofreading and editing and the gleaning of unimportant and unrelated ideas.

Lindia W. Speer
Crockett County High School
Alamo, Tennessee

When my Basic English 12 students were asked to choose their own research topics, they came up with an interesting, if depressing, list: child abuse, teen suicide, teen runaways, drunk drivers, rights of criminals, etc. They learned how to locate sources and to read and take notes. So far so good. Finally, they arrived in class with fifty notecards and "what-now?" expressions on their faces. I asked them to write a journal entry describing what they had found that was most important or most interesting about their topics. Then, I asked them to say what they had discovered by writing. And they did so with considerable clarity--though I'd never mentioned "thesis statements" to them. Instead what *emerged* from their writing--and thinking and talking--was a focus for their papers.

Next, I asked them to sort their notecards into stacks and make a list of all the labels they had used. I looked at each list individually with the students and asked them to put a check mark next to the three or four items they had the most cards for. Together we looked at the other labels and talked about how information from the remaining cards might be related to the three or four major items checked. Again, the organization of the eventual papers was emerging rather than being imposed.

When we talked about which of the items might logically come first in the papers, students began to see patterns or sequences. Given their particular topics, many discovered that a problem-solution sequence would work well. The result was that my basic students--who had seldom, if ever, been asked to write a long, sustained piece of writing--were ready to write drafts which were logical and organized. Their frustration was minimal, their feeling of success high.

Ellen H. Brinkley
Madeira High School
Cincinnati, Ohio

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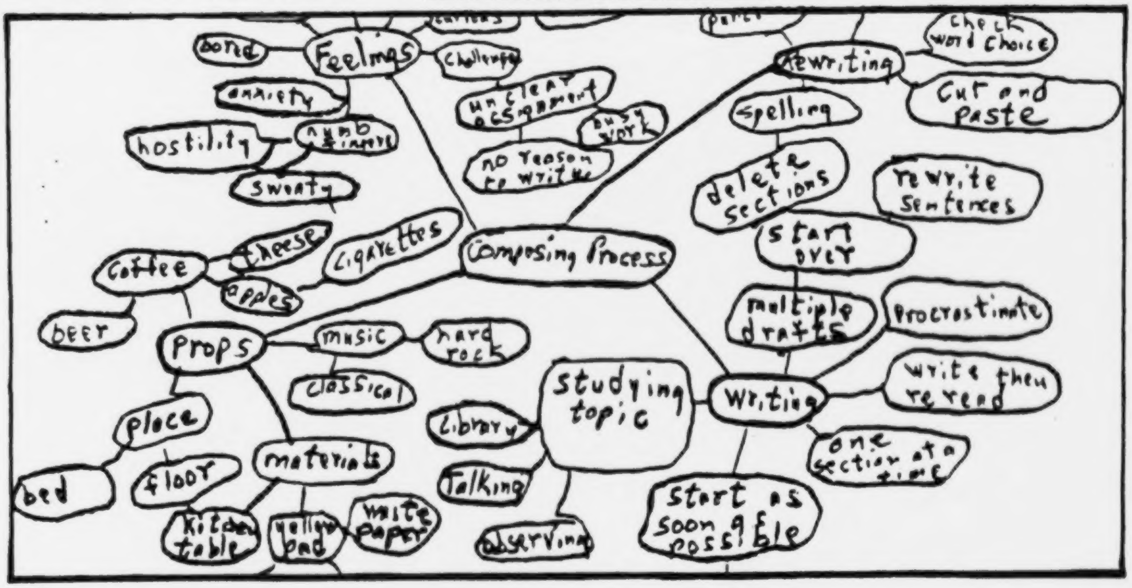
## CLUSTERING*

WRITE-Now Workshop Participant: I'm familiar with listing, outlining, and freewriting as pre-writing or prevision activities, but what do you mean by clustering.

WRITE-Now Instructor: Clustering is a form of brainstorming. Let me share an illustration from the February 1981 issue of The National Writing Project Network Newsletter. It is a clustering activity which W. Ross Winterowd describes in his second edition of The Contemporary Writer(Chapter 3, Harcourt, 1981).


Feelings
bored
challenge
anxiety
unclear assignment
numb fingers
hostility
busy work
no reason to write
sweaty
cheese
cigarettes
Coffee
apples
Composing Process
beer
Props
music
hard rock
classical
place
Library
materials
bed
floor
Talking
kitchen table
yellow pad
write paper
observing
rewriting
check word choice
spelling
Cut and paste
delete sections
rewrite sentences
start over
multiple drafts
Procrastinate
Studying topic
Writing
write then reread
one section at a time
Start as soon as possible

You can see how whoever did the clustering identified different aspects of the writing process, possible props necessary for writing, the best conditions under which writing can take place, and the attitudes toward writing which the individual holds. The "clusterer" demonstrates a way of focusing on his or her own writing processes.

I like to do a few clustering exercises with my ABE/GED students. I work at the chalkboard while they help me with topics and connections. I believe that this experience helps them to see how they might explore their thinking prior to narrowing a general topic and producing a first draft.

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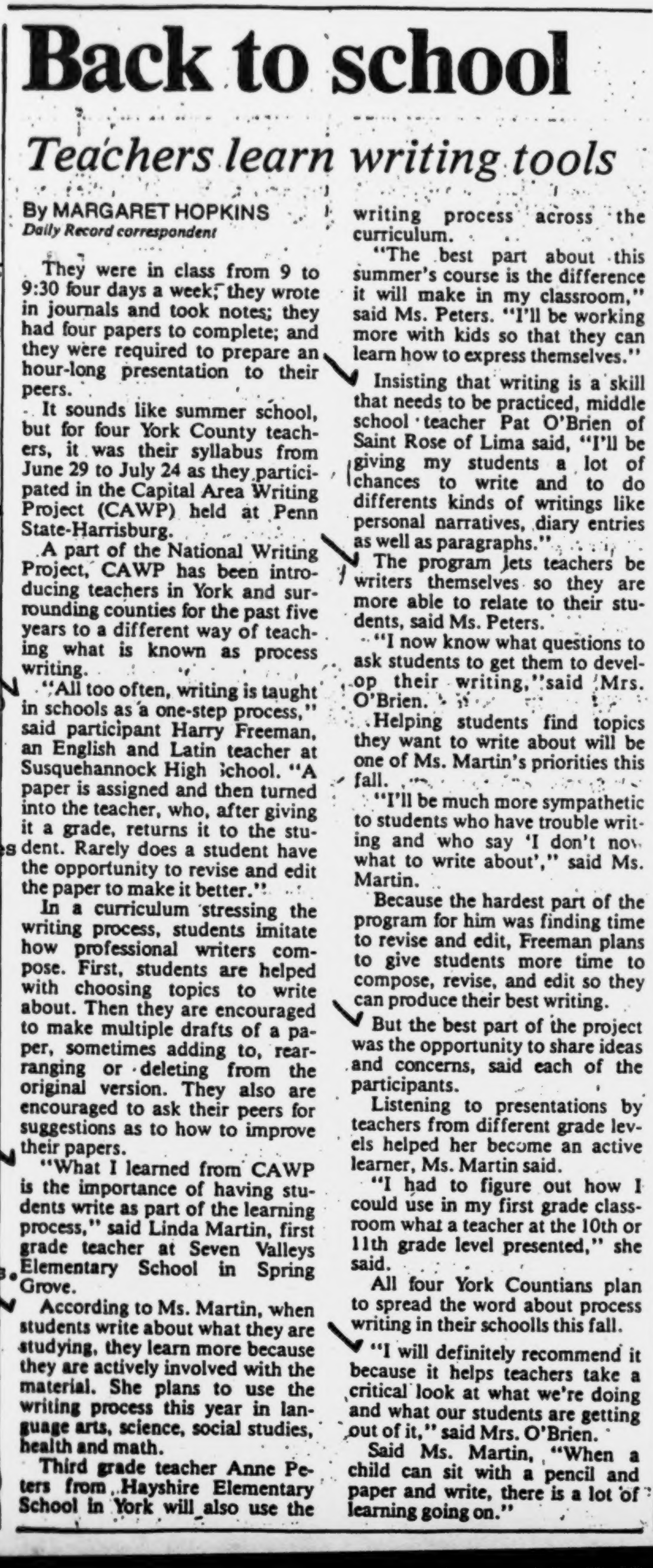
*Adapted from an article by Charles R. Duke.

Since its beginnings as the Bay Area Writing Project in 1974, the National Writing Project has helped to teach and inspire thousands of teachers, K-College, to be teachers of writing. What these local participants in a recent summer program are sharing and encouraging is also very relevant to teachers of adults in ABE/GED programs. Adult education teachers are welcome to become involved in NWP courses and seminars.

We were very fortunate to be associated with the L.I.U./Penn State Writing Project from 1980 to 1983. That experience lead directly to the Write-for-Life Program, a 1983-84 310 project for ABE practitioners.



# Back to school

## Teachers learn writing tools

By MARGARET HOPKINS
*Daily Record correspondent*

They were in class from 9 to 9:30 four days a week; they wrote in journals and took notes; they had four papers to complete; and they were required to prepare an hour-long presentation to their peers.

It sounds like summer school, but for four York County teachers, it was their syllabus from June 29 to July 24 as they participated in the Capital Area Writing Project (CAWP) held at Penn State-Harrisburg.

A part of the National Writing Project, CAWP has been introducing teachers in York and surrounding counties for the past five years to a different way of teaching what is known as process writing.

"All too often, writing is taught in schools as a one-step process," said participant Harry Freeman, an English and Latin teacher at Susquehannock High School. "A paper is assigned and then turned into the teacher, who, after giving it a grade, returns it to the student. Rarely does a student have the opportunity to revise and edit the paper to make it better."

In a curriculum stressing the writing process, students imitate how professional writers compose. First, students are helped with choosing topics to write about. Then they are encouraged to make multiple drafts of a paper, sometimes adding to, rearranging or deleting from the original version. They also are encouraged to ask their peers for suggestions as to how to improve their papers.

"What I learned from CAWP is the importance of having students write as part of the learning process," said Linda Martin, first grade teacher at Seven Valleys Elementary School in Spring Grove.

According to Ms. Martin, when students write about what they are studying, they learn more because they are actively involved with the material. She plans to use the writing process this year in language arts, science, social studies, health and math.

Third grade teacher Anne Peters from Hayshire Elementary School in York will also use the writing process across the curriculum.

"The best part about this summer's course is the difference it will make in my classroom," said Ms. Peters. "I'll be working more with kids so that they can learn how to express themselves."

Insisting that writing is a skill that needs to be practiced, middle school teacher Pat O'Brien of Saint Rose of Lima said, "I'll be giving my students a lot of chances to write and to do differents kinds of writings like personal narratives, diary entries as well as paragraphs."

The program lets teachers be writers themselves so they are more able to relate to their students, said Ms. Peters.

"I now know what questions to ask students to get them to develop their writing," said Mrs. O'Brien.

Helping students find topics they want to write about will be one of Ms. Martin's priorities this fall.

"I'll be much more sympathetic to students who have trouble writing and who say 'I don't now what to write about'," said Ms. Martin.

Because the hardest part of the program for him was finding time to revise and edit, Freeman plans to give students more time to compose, revise, and edit so they can produce their best writing.

But the best part of the project was the opportunity to share ideas and concerns, said each of the participants.

Listening to presentations by teachers from different grade levels helped her become an active learner, Ms. Martin said.

"I had to figure out how I could use in my first grade classroom what a teacher at the 10th or 11th grade level presented," she said.

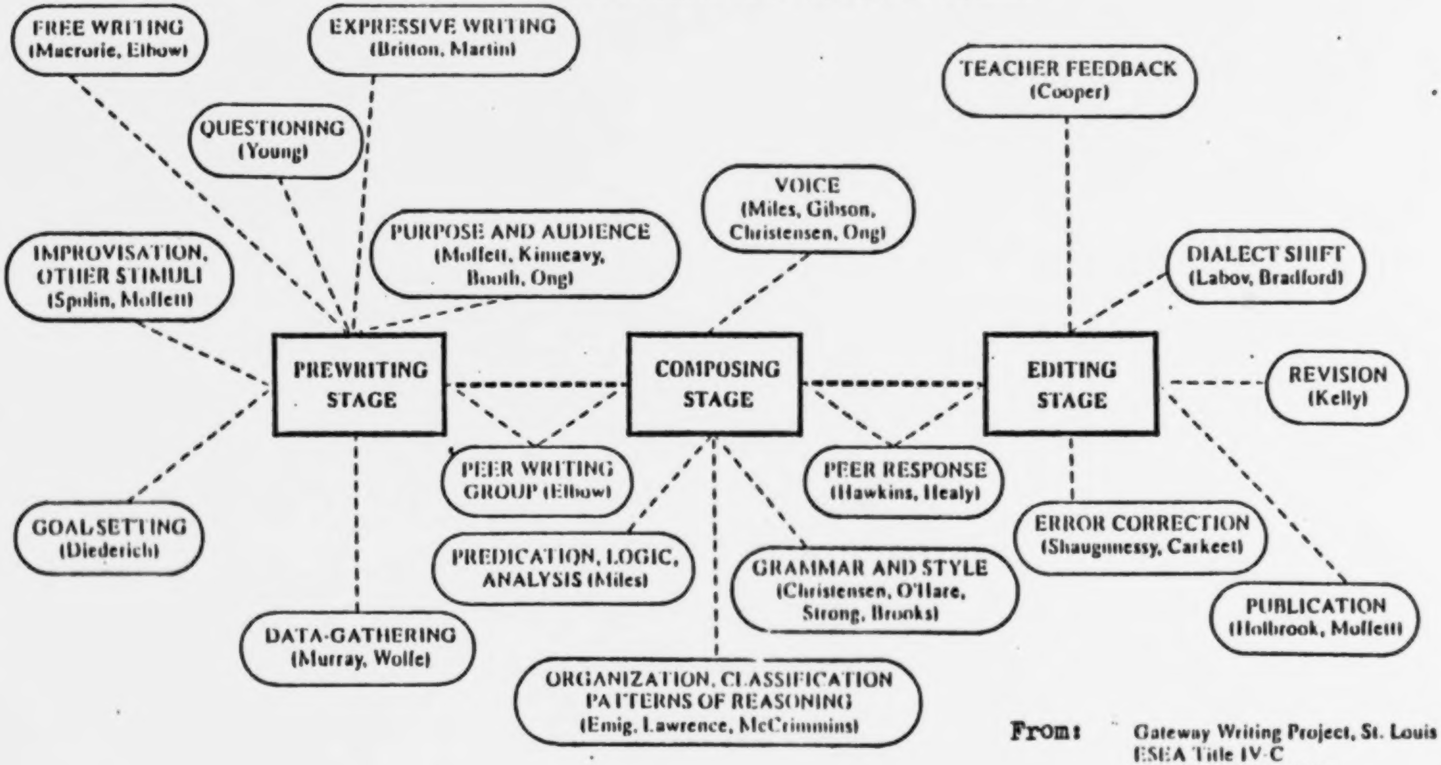
All four York Countians plan to spread the word about process writing in their schoolls this fall.

"I will definitely recommend it because it helps teachers take a critical look at what we're doing and what our students are getting out of it," said Mrs. O'Brien.

Said Ms. Martin, "When a child can sit with a pencil and paper and write, there is a lot of learning going on."

Model of Writing Process

# MODEL OF THE TEACHING AND WRITING PROCESS


FREE WRITING (Macrorie, Elbow)
EXPRESSIVE WRITING (Britton, Martin)
QUESTIONING (Young)
TEACHER FEEDBACK (Cooper)
VOICE (Miles, Gibson, Christensen, Ong)
PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE (Moffett, Kinneavy, Booth, Ong)
IMPROVISATION, OTHER STIMULI (Spolin, Moffett)
DIALECT SHIFT (Labov, Bradford)
PREWRITING STAGE
COMPOSING STAGE
EDITING STAGE
REVISION (Kelly)
PEER WRITING GROUP (Elbow)
PEER RESPONSE (Hawkins, Healy)
GOALSETTING (Diederich)
ERROR CORRECTION (Shaughnessy, Carkeet)
PREDICATION, LOGIC, ANALYSIS (Miles)
GRAMMAR AND STYLE (Christensen, O'Hare, Strong, Brooks)
PUBLICATION (Holbrook, Moffett)
DATA-GATHERING (Murray, Wolfe)
ORGANIZATION, CLASSIFICATION PATTERNS OF REASONING (Emig, Lawrence, McCrimmins)

**From:** Gateway Writing Project, St. Louis
ESEA Title IV-C
(Revised, BAWP, 1980)

# THE WRITING . OCESS

## The Different Stages of the Writing Process

(handout used in July of 1986 at ABE/GED Staff Dev. Conference in Kentucky)

| INCUBATION | PREWRITING (finding a topic; generating ideas; getting started; thinking on paper) | FIRST DRAFTS (rough or slop drafts) | REVISING/ REWRITING | FINISHED DRAFT PROOFREADING EDITING |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| → | → | → | → | |
| | -interpretative note-taking<br>-class discussion<br>-small group talk about topic<br>-lists/notes/jottings<br>-outlines<br>-generating questions<br>-timed or free writing<br>-talking ideas into a tape recorder<br>-journals<br>-logs<br>-"reaction" papers<br>-short responses to questions<br>-debates<br>-panels | -journals<br>-logs<br>-reaction papers<br>-short in-class pieces | -conferences with peers<br>-conferences with teacher<br>-revising worksheets<br>-reading piece aloud<br>-tutoring in Writing Center | -concern here with/<br>-grammar<br>-punctuation<br>-spelling<br>-sentence structure |

Not all writing has to go to the final stage.

It's important in these stages not to be too concerned with spelling/ grammar/punctuation.

## SOME WRITING-FOR-LEARNING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS*

Why does writing encourage learning?

1. Writing focuses thought.
2. Writing makes thought available for inspection.
3. Writing allows more complex thought.
4. Writing translates mental images.
5. Writing is multisensory.
6. Writing motivates communication.

When is writing most likely to encourage learning?

1. - when students decide what to write about.
2. - when students talk as part of writing.
3. - when students view writing as a process.
4. - when students have their own reasons for writing.
5. - when students write frequently.

How can teachers link writing to learning subject matter? They can, by assigning or encouraging -

1. writing to gain access to what is known.
2. writing to preserve and express ideas and experiences.
3. writing to inform others.
4. writing to persuade others.
5. writing to transact business.
6. writing to entertain.

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* From: "Helping Students Learn Through Writing," in *Language Arts*, October 1982. Shirley Haley-James, the author of the article which we have outlined, is Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Georgia State University in Atlanta. Permission to reprint authorized by NCTE.

# A SWIMMING LESSON FOR ABE/GED INSTRUCTORS*

Imagine, swimming lessons given by reading a book with practice achieved by performing the strokes and breathing on a flat surface, like the floor. Visual and auditory modes are used, practice is provided, but why then can't the student swim? Is it possible that each person learning is bringing different experiences, comprehending and handling the information in a diverse manner, and reacting to the provided stimuli in multiple ways?

Writing is much like swimming. Without exploration in how writers write, their feelings and their problems, it is difficult to teach another. An English course should be required in which writers learn to prewrite by brainstorming, rehearsing sentences in their heads, and recognizing the usefulness of the process. Students will learn to find their focus and voice and take risks.

When people become part of a community of writers, they learn to receive a piece of writing by restating another's story in their own words and to point out phrasing that works or is pleasing to the ear. They share writing in groups, learn questioning techniques, and grow in confidence and friendship.

Participants in a writing process workshop learn that the steps in writing are flexible, not a dependent hierarchy. Having once experienced the concept of the writing process, teachers apply the thinking strategies to other areas of the curriculum and help students to make the connection between reading, writing, and thinking.

Katie Yando
Prudence Hatch McMann
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*From: English Journal, February 1987. Permission to reprint authorized by NCTE.

Kim - Just The Beginning(typed to match her original hand-written copy)

Five years ago, March 1978 ~~- I lost my job.~~ Due to circumstances beyond his control, my boss informed me that I would no longer be in his employ. I was at loss for words. ~~What could I say~~? For ~~that matter~~ what ~~could~~ would I now do?

I searched the job market, ~~of which~~ to no avail I came up with nothing. One inexperienced, unskilled eighteen-year old. And to top that off - no high school diploma.

To make matters worse, I am an epileptic. I never lied on any of my applications ~~idic~~ indicating otherwise. I do not feel it ~~is~~ a burden or hinderance. Apparently some employers have and ~~do~~ always will.

I didn't apply for jobs that I knew would endanger myself, but I still couldn't make any headway. ~~Many times~~ Sometimes the situation was hilarious. I would be having an interview and everything was going fine, ~~when they suddenly~~ until he saw my medical report.

Not ~~was~~ unexpected, but quite suddenly all the positions had been filled - of course I would recicieve a phone call in the event of an opening. . . . I never did.

I could not continue living off my roomates. ~~Bre~~Although that said it ~~didn't~~ wasn't important ~~matter~~, ~~it mattered~~ that fact remained, that it was important to me.

I tried borrowing money from my family, but they didn't have it to give. At that point I knew I had no alternative but to go to the Department of Public Welfare.

I ~~qualfieded~~ qualified, with the exception of a Doctors report confirming my epilepsy. My Doctor sent it and that was to be the beginning of a three year period recieving ~~welfare~~ D.P.A.

The process-conference approach to the teaching of writing in an ABE class might follow a script such as the one below. The instructor and student had these conferences over a period of two weeks. Several brief conferences with different students can easily be conducted during one class session.

Conference 1

Kim: I think I'll write about some of the problems I've had finding a job.

George: Why is that topic important to you?

Kim: I've been thinking about the fact that I was on welfare for almost four years. It was depressing. I wanted to make something of myself.

George: I'll be eager to read your first draft.

Conference 2 (Kim has produced the first few pages of her story.)

George: Can you tell me more about the epilepsy and the situation with your roommates?

Kim: Yes. I was thinking about a different beginning. Maybe I'll explain how my physical problems started. The roommates really showed a lot of understanding and patience. I'll probably write more about how they helped me.

George: How did you feel when this happened?

Kim: I was very happy, but the job turned out to be a dead end.

George: Did you write your feelings?

Kim: I want to do more than just give facts. I'll think about how I want to deal with my feelings when I talk about being let go.

Conference 3 (Kim has written a few more pages on the general topic mentioned in the first conference.)

George: What kinds of changes have you made?

Kim: I-thought a couple of things. I think it would be clearer to other readers if I wrote more about the epilepsy. There's a lot of grief being unemployed. Maybe readers who don't have any physical handicaps will think about their self-pity trips.

George: Where is this piece of writing taking you?

Kim: It's making me see my experience better. I was really pretty stupid or ignorant about knowing how to look for a job. I'm more aware of the job market. I think I can do a better job during interviews of selling myself as a good worker.

George: What surprised you in the draft?

Kim: I think I got into too much detail. The part about his expression It has been with me all these years. Maybe I got caught up in it.

George: What did you like best in the piece?

Kim: I started out with a better opening. I gave a better background for my topic.

George: What is your topic now?

Kim: How rough it is getting and keeping a job when you have a handicap. Not just epilepsy, you know, asthma, Parkinson's disease - things that can lead to self-pity trips.

Conference 4 (Kim has written a new opening.)

George: Tell me about where you are now.

Kim: I put more detail in a few places. I have a completely new beginning. I wanted to give more insights.

George: What's next?

Kim: I want to work on some of the words, to make sure the dictionary definitions and the feelings go together. I also want to go back to when I was seventeen or eighteen and talk about losing my job. I want to say more about my present employers. I want to surprise you.

Conference 5

Kim: I think I want to write another piece about my work as a motel maid supervisor. I had trouble at home and ran away. I was able to get that job after a couple other very temporary jobs. I want to write about how hard it is to be on your own away from home. Getting somewhere and surviving.

George: I think you have plenty to write about. Anything else with your piece about finding work when you have handicaps?

Kim: Yes, I'm going to look for spelling and grammar mistakes. I think I'm ready to finish that chapter.

George: Fine. I can see you have found a few of these minor errors already. Any questions for me?

Kim: Did you like my new opening? Do you understand why I went back in time?

George: Yes, I really liked your revisions. I understood your reasons for taking your story back to the accident. What do you think about sharing this story with other adult education students and other staff members?

Kim: I think I have something that should be shared. It might help someone who has had similar problems.

George: Let's talk about that when we clean up this piece next week.

Kim - a selection from a later draft of the same piece

Since much of this story is indirectly ~~in connection~~ concerning my epilepsy, I feel I must take you back with me in time to thirteen years ago.

The year was 1970. I was ten years old and in the fifth grade. The bell for recess rang everyone filing out the door running for the playground - I hung behind never liking the pushing and shoving.

About five minutes later, I stepped out the door, oblivious to the scene around the side of the building. Two boys were playing one on one baseball using the wall as their catcher. I was going to find my friends and join in whatever they were up to, but right as I turned the corner of the building he chose that moment to swing the bat.

I felt myself drowning in darkness, voices shouting, someone holding me all a the same time. The boy that had swung the bat realized, it was my head & not the ball that he hit. ~~I~~ When he saw my legs ~~give way~~ ~~me starting to fall~~ go out from under me - he had come up from behind me, cushioned my fall & held me in his arms.

I awoke only to find myself ~~in some boys arms~~ in my neighbor's arms Keith's embrace staring contently ~~in~~ a me. ~~my eyes~~. In his eyes, I saw pain & sadness. He had not allowed anyone to touch me. When he saw that I had opened my eyes his expression had changed; ~~and he never looked or talked to me after that~~. He helped me get to the nurse's office, and on the way he spologized. He told me he had never seen me coming it all happened too quickly. That day was the first and last he ever spoke to me but ~~try~~ to, as I have - I'll never forget that expression on his face.

About two weeks later, I had my first grand mall epileptic seizure. Its impossible to ~~try and~~ explain what the person them-

## Some Recommended Resources for ABE/GED Teachers

Allen, T.D. Writing to Create Ourselves: New Approaches for Teachers Students, and Writers. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982.

Allen worked with students of predominantly Native American origins, many of whom used English as a second language, but her methods work equally well with any students previously uninspired by traditional approaches to language use. By helping students discover what it is they have to say, they are motivated to gain language skills. By writing, we create ourselves. Students learn grammar and syntax in their functional capacity so that someone else will want to read what they have to say.

Apps, Jerold W. Improving Your Writing Skills: A Learning Plan for Adults. Chicago, Illinois: Follett Publishing Company, 1982.

Written for adults who must write as part of their day-to-day activities. Starts with a guide for assessing writing problems and then suggests a way of correcting them - a "learning plan." Explains how to select courses, conferences, correspondence programs, and other resources. Writing exercises are presented throughout the book so the reader can practice immediately the various skills discussed.

Coughlin, Merle T. Teaching Reading, Writing, and Study Skills Through Health Science Content. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Merle Coughlin, 1976.

Originally devised as a curriculum to make the teaching of basic skills relevant to adults who were interested in health careers, the author says that ABE teachers can easily adapt the course to help adults with other careers in mind, such as business or education, by substituting readings appropriate to those fields. The guide focuses on many skills essential for reading, writing, and studying effectively. This resource book was prepared under a federal grant from the U.S. Office of Education, grant number OEG-0-74-1761.

Dressman, Michael R. "When You Tell Them to Write and They Ask, 'Why Bother?'" Confronting Writing Obstacles, (Ed.) Donald R. Gallo, New Britain, Connecticut: Connecticut Council of Teachers of English, Fall 1977, pp. 11-14.

Stimulating article for ABE teachers to read before they attempt to talk to their students about the value of writing on the job, in school, and in society.

Elbow, Peter. Writing Without Teachers. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Outlines a practical approach for learning how to write. Elbow's approach is especially helpful to people who get "stuck" or blocked in their writing. Includes guidelines for freewriting exercises and suggestions for keeping a diary. Provides techniques for both the writer and the reader on how to react to one another and includes advice on how to avoid pointless arguments. Elbow challenges the traditional model of the writing process.

Epes, Mary. "Developing New Models of the Comp-Lab Course," *Moving Between Practice and Research in Writing*, (Ed.) Ann Humes, Los Alamitos, California: SWRL Educational Research and Development, 1981, pp. 139-142.

From 1977 to 1979, York College/CUNY developed the Comp-Lab basic writing course. The course combined traditional classroom instruction with student work in an autotutorial laboratory. Because of the success of the college course, the project designers extended the program to several non-college settings. A model of the Comp-Lab course was developed to improve on-the-job writing skills for employees of the Bronx Psychiatric Center. The course has also been adapted to be used with CETA/JTPA trainees and adult-education students.

Giacomelli, Eloah F. "Writing as an Effective Learning Tool," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Pacific Northwest Regional Conference on English in the Two-Year College, October, 1982. ED 222 911

A program of carefully controlled and guided writing can be an effective tool to help English as a second language(ESL)students overcome the difficulties they still have with basic English structure, as well as to expand their linguistic boundaries. Tailored to the needs and problems of adult immigrants reading at a level between grades 4 and 6, the program content focuses on features occurring in everyday language. 15p.

Jacobi, Ernst. *Writing at Work: Dos, Don'ts, and How Tos*. Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden Book Company, Inc., 1976.

Informative and easy to read, this book offers practical advice that helps business, technical, and professional people or students in writing courses to make their writing sharper and more persuasive. Deals with a variety of writing tasks such as writing letters, reports, newsletters, and long proposals.

Kalister, Rose Ann. "The Adult Learner in the Writing Center: Teaching Techniques," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Writing Centers Association, May, 1981. ED 209 674

A writing center course designed for adult learners offers features that will work in either a credit or a noncredit course. 7p.

Lodwig, Richard R. *Career English*. Rochelle Park, NJ: Hayden Book Company, Inc., 1981.

Career part is directed towards the concerns of students going on either for more education or for jobs. The "English" part deals with the language skills essential to getting and keeping a job. The eleven chapters involve students in basic English activities: speaking, listening, writing, reading, interviewing, notetaking, and researching. Interspersed throughout the chapters are case-history interviews with workers in a variety of careers.

Turner, Richard H. The Letters You Write(Follett Success Skills Series). Chicago, Illinois: Follett Publishing Company, 1982.

Especially good for ABE students, this book provides activities that teach about the parts of a letter, the different kinds of letters, effective letter writing, and the postal service. Has twenty-one two-page lessons and a final examination.

Utah State Office of Education. "Adult Education Basic Skills Task Force: Writing Skills," Salt Lake City, 1982. ED 219 795

The basic communication skills task force consisted of twelve adult education teachers from several local programs. The task force developed basic skills curricula for reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The curricula materials are contained in three separate booklets: (1) Reading, (2) Writing, and (3) Speaking and Listening. Each booklet contains pretests, remediation exercises, post tests, and additional resource materials for selected basic objectives; and reflects a developmental beginning for continuing work on basic adult skills curriculum. Materials in this booklet may be duplicated, adapted, and/or enriched - as long as they are well used. 194p.

Weinstein, Carole and Bonne August. "Applied Writing: A Writing Skills Curriculum for Adult Learners," Albany, New York: New York State Education Department, June, 1981. ED 216 709

This writing skills curriculum provides ABE teachers with a perspective on intended writing goals for their ABE students, delineates specific writing objectives, and presents a framework within which writing activities can effectively take place. An excellent source of process-oriented writing activities. 83p.